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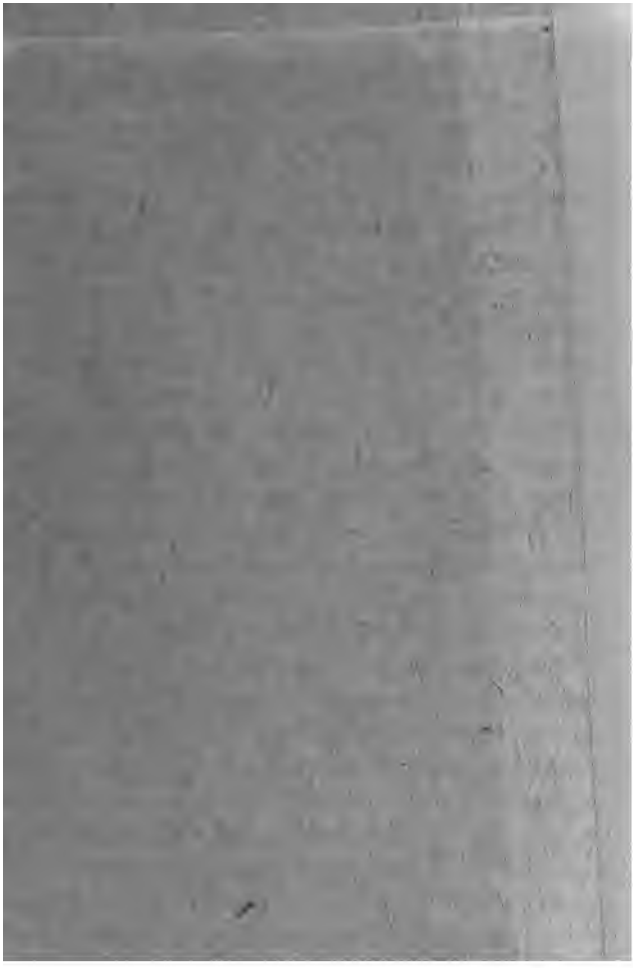

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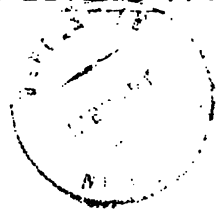

"I wish," said Peter the Great, "a window looking out into Europe."

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THE TSAR'S WINDOW.

CHAPTER I.

DORRIS'S JOURNAL.

November 27, 1877.

HOMESICKNESS, chills, cold, fog; outside the window, a musky atmosphere, and a dull roar which tells of toiling crowds at a distance; inside, a sombre room, furnished in ugly chintz: in short, London, — London in November, London in a fog, London seen from the windows of a hotel in its darkest, most unlovely aspect. For lack of something better to do, I am wondering vaguely where all the smoke and fog come from. I can picture it rising slowly from millions of factories and breweries, miles upon miles of palaces, and acres of wretched dwellings. The splendor and the squalor are alike hidden by this misty curtain, which settles down by my window, and on my spirits, causing an unpleasant gloom. How the passers-by jostle each other with their umbrellas, and of what a dull color are the brick houses opposite! I take a look at the room, and the prospect is still more depressing. Voluminous cloth curtains *obstruct* the entrance of the feeble yellow

light. Dark, chintz-covered chairs, and a tiny fire in the microscopic grate, complete the gloomy picture.

My sister is making futile efforts to warm one foot, and to keep from crying. Poor Grace! She, too, is wondering why she came, and she thinks I am so interested in my writing that I do not notice her.

Of course Tom considers this the finest and most cheerful hotel in the city, as he selected it, and we are staying here. After the complaints which I made this morning, I am sure that Tom would pronounce me a sour old maid if I belonged to another family; but as I am his sister-in-law he thinks kindly of me, and speaks of me as "Dear Dorris! A little quick, you know, but the kindest and the cleverest woman in the world."

I never shall become so accustomed to Tom as not to laugh at him. What a blessing that there is something to laugh at!

The waiter comes in to know what we will order for dinner. He looks at us as if he wished to say, "Poor creatures, how sorry I am for you! After all, it is not your fault that you were not born British subjects."

Why did it occur to Grace that she would like to spend a winter in St. Petersburg? Why should she have cared about getting acquainted with our Russian kinsman? Why did Tom make that investment which gave him the money for this trip? Above all, what evil genius whispered to me that it would be pleasant to accompany them? To these questions I can find no answer, and I am going to drown my sorrows in crumpets and tea. Those articles, at least, are good here.

CHAPTER II.

LETTERS FROM THOMAS AND GRACE CATHERWOOD.

LONDON, Nov. 27.

MY DEAR MOTHER, — I have not quite recovered my land legs, and Grace is completely knocked up after our long sea-voyage. We were eleven days on the water, and though it is humiliating to confess it, I was absurdly sick. Grace was wretched in body and mind, and Dorris did the cheerfulness for the whole party. She was irrepressible, and for two days was the only lady at table. We landed yesterday in Liverpool, and came directly here, where we have found nothing but fog and rain. Grace has succumbed to her miseries, and a bad attack of homesickness. There is a suspicious redness about her eyes, and she avoids looking me directly in the face. She told me that nothing would induce her to write a letter to-day, and has retired to her room with a novel to cry; but I shall take her on to Paris in a day or two, where I hope Worth's influence will revive her.

I don't care much for London at this season, myself, and if Grace were not homesick, I might be so, but I feel obliged to differ from my wife. It ruins women to agree

with them, which is the reason, dear mother, I have always given you so much trouble.

Dorris has set her energies doggedly to work to study up Russia, and is buried in books which treat of that subject. I never saw such a woman for finding amusement in trifles, and for picking up information on all occasions, from all sorts of people. I only hope she will not set up for an intellectual woman. She is the best traveller I ever saw.

This note will inform you of our safe arrival, and I dare say Grace will write from Paris, and tell you about the fashions. I have considered your feelings in writing this, and have refrained from slang. You should give me a great deal of credit, for I deserve it.

Grace and Dorris send love, and so does

Your affectionate son,

THOMAS.

PARIS, Nov. 30.

MY DEAR SISTER, — Tom is really *too* dreadful. He was prowling all over the city last night until after twelve o'clock, with that young Mr. Lane whose father used to be in love with Aunt Emma. I wanted him to write to his mother, but he said that he wrote to her in London, and he *would* go off. Dorris only laughs at him, but I shall use my influence to get him started for your country next week, if our dresses are finished. I am longing to see you, and your dear little girl, and your Russian home; but if I have my gray brocade trimmed *with fringe, it* will take two days longer, for the fringe

has to be made, and Dorris says it will be *hideous* without the fringe; so our departure depends on my decision about that dress. These dressmakers are really too aggravating.

We had such a rough passage across the channel that I was very glad of my new ulster which I bought in London. Tom's mother sent you a mince-pie, for she remembered that you used to like them. I took it out of my trunk when we were in London, to make room for Karamsin's History of Russia, in six volumes, which Dorris bought, and packed in with my collars and cuffs, so you can imagine how *they* looked when we got here! The pie was done up in brown paper, and Tom thought that the parcel contained his slippers, and he put all his boots and shoes on top of it; it looks now as if some one had been sitting on it, but I shall keep it for you.

Dorris does nothing but read, and she says she does *not* believe that old Mr. Lane was in love with Aunt Emma. Tom is so much handsomer than he used to be, I can hardly wait for you to see him.

Dorris looks as young as I do. She does n't seem to care about getting married since that sad engagement of hers, though that was eight years ago. I never could understand how she could fall in love with a man who was dying of consumption. Tom never has had an ill day since I married him except last summer when he was poisoned, — and *how* cross he was!

Dorris behaves just like a widow. Some widows don't act much like it, though. That Mrs. Miller used to flirt *awfully with Tom* before he was engaged to me,

but he *never* thought she was pretty. I think I shall have the fringe on that dress. The milliner has brought some bonnets for me to look at, so I must leave my letter.

Kiss your baby for me, and give my love to Nicolas.

Your loving sister,

GRACE CATHERWOOD.

BERLIN, Dec. 8.

DEAR MOTHER, — We are on our way to the North Pole, having left the fascinations of Paris behind us. I made a discovery in that city which is worth a fortune to me. I found the emperor of all tailors, a man perfect in his profession, which is a thing you can rarely see. You will be delighted with the results of our acquaintance when you behold them.

Grace has purchased every article which was recommended to her to keep us warm on the journey, and the consequence is, my big black bag is completely filled with her traps. It flew open at the Paris station, and startling were the secrets which were disclosed.

We are all delighted at the prospect of getting out of this beastly hole. We have been in a chronic state of shivering ever since we landed in Europe, and Grace is looking forward to getting warm in St. Petersburg, for she says that Alice never mentions the cold in her letters, so she does not believe it can be as cold as London and Paris. Never say anything more to me, *my dear mother,* about the beauty of this Berlin street,

"Unter den Linden," or some such name. It does not compare with Fifth Avenue. The "Linden" is the poorest apology for a tree that I ever beheld. I shall be glad to take my departure to-night, and as I have some accounts to settle with the courier, I must leave you now.

Your devoted son,

THOMAS.

CHAPTER III.

DORRIS'S JOURNAL.

December 9, 1877.

SITTING on the floor in a low, smoky Russian car, with a flickering candle over my head, I am trying to write a short account of our journey. We entered the land of the Tsar about three hours ago, after travelling twenty-four hours from Berlin. Tom says that ours is the most competent courier who ever took charge of a party, so of course it must be so. He is tall and dark, and looks like a bandit. He is known as Gustave, but we don't often dare to address him by name. He makes profound bows whenever he enters our presence, and is continually giving us titles such as "Excellency," "My Lady," "Your Grace," and then correcting himself, as though he had always served the nobility, and found it difficult to descend to common mortals.

He is not travelling with us; we are travelling with him. We do whatever he tells us, — eat, drink, walk, and sleep when he thinks best. I fancy that he makes a good profit on everything, even on the suspicious-looking apples which he brings us; but such is the awe with which he inspires me that I dare not remonstrate.

We left Berlin at seven o'clock last night. When I

awoke this morning, my first movement was to peep out of the window. A flat, snowy country met my eyes, and a gray sky. The day has been monotonous. Tom has spent his time poring over a Russian Grammar. He knit his brows, made various notes in a new memorandum-book, and appeared to be studying intently; but when, towards night, I catechised him, I could not discover that his knowledge went beyond the fact that "Da" meant "Yes," and "Nyett" was Russian for "No."

It was five o'clock this afternoon when we reached the Russian frontier. Our advent had been telegraphed from Berlin by some one whom Tom knows there, and we received every attention. A polite official conducted us to the restaurant, where we had supper. The excellent French which he spoke did not surprise me. I have always had a vague idea that Russians used their own language very little, and that one could travel throughout the country simply with a knowledge of French.

The waiter, however, did not understand my French orders, and Gustave's powers as interpreter were called into play. Our travelling companions wore long, dark cloaks, and fur hats. That was as it should be. But the mild air was all wrong, and the thermometer was wrong too. It should be colder in Russia.

Grace and I uttered an exclamation of horror when we entered the compartment which had been reserved for us in the Russian train; for, in spite of the mild temperature outside, the little stove was nearly bursting

with wood, and was burning fiercely. We struggled vainly to open the double window; at last we were obliged to call the guard, who remonstrated earnestly with us, in his unintelligible language, before he could be induced to comply with our request. When the room had become somewhat cooler, Grace lay down on one of the hard seats, with a travelling-bag for a pillow, and, covered with her fur cloak, was soon sound asleep. I made some attempts to look out of the window, but finding the night dark and the landscape invisible, I give my attention to my journal. The candle shows signs of going out altogether, so I will follow Grace's example and try to sleep.

ST. PETERSBURG, Dec. 13.

The rest of that night journey was inexpressibly weird. Being fond of novelty, I was pleased with it, though my bones ached sadly from my hard bed. We lumbered on slowly and painfully. I felt sorry for the engine, it seemed to labor so. Every now and then we stopped to rest. A mysterious, funereal bell tinkled every five seconds during the stoppage, and strange voices kept up a continual jabber in an unknown tongue under the window. Then on we plodded through the darkness, and it seemed as if daylight would never come.

I had fallen into a light doze, when our door was unceremoniously opened, and a face framed in a long, dark beard was thrust in. The hair was parted in the middle and fell on the shoulders, and the head was

surmounted by a round cap, ornamented about the rim with the eyes of peacock-feathers. I gazed at this curious figure inquiringly, and he ejaculated something which sounded like "Day." Grace plied him with questions in German, and then in French ; but he continued to make unintelligible sounds, and finally retreated for a moment, returning with some tumblers filled with steaming tea, and some delicious bread. We blessed the intruder in all the languages at our command ; and never was anything so refreshing to me as that tea! Surely, one must come to Russia to have tea served in the middle of the night.

We were so delighted with our midnight meal that whenever the tinkling of that goblin bell awoke us during the night, we put our heads out of the window and ordered tea in every language which we knew ; but as Russian was not included in our repertory, we sometimes got cigarettes, or more wood for the stove, instead of the article we asked for.

The long night dragged itself away at last, and I opened my eyes upon the most desolate tract of country I have ever beheld. Flat and uncultivated, marshy in many parts, no trees except stunted pines and birches, and not a hill or a mountain. Far as the eye could reach, on either side, the same dreary expanse. Snow everywhere, of course, even in the air, — not coming down in great flakes, as in dear old New England, but sifting through the air like a mist, and falling almost imperceptibly.

We passed *few villages*, and no great cities. I caught

some glimpses of peasants, in long sheepskin coats, high felt boots, and fur caps. This seems to be their out-of-door costume. In some poor little huts with no visible windows appeared startled figures in bright-colored shirts belted in over the trousers, which were full, and tucked into high boots. They all had long beards, and hair parted in the middle.

All day there were endless stoppages at stations where there seemed to be no passengers to get on or off, and always that melancholy bell-ringing.

It was after dark when a forest of lights in the distance proclaimed the end of our journey to be near. I was half-dazed when I tumbled out of the cars and into the arms of Nicolas, who was waiting to welcome us. He received us most cordially, kissing Tom on both cheeks, which so embarrassed the poor fellow that he looked uncomfortable for some time after. My Russian brother-in-law is a very handsome man. In the six years which have elapsed since he carried Alice away with him, I have had time to forget how good-looking he was. I was surprised to find Alice changed so little. She has grown somewhat stouter and a trifle more self-conscious, but beyond that she is the same happy little woman as of old.

We found her at the Hotel de l' Europe when we got there, after what seemed a very long drive through streets filled with clumsy horse-cars and funny little sleighs.

Our tongues ran busily during dinner; and when Alice *and her husband* took their departure, I was glad to go *to bed.*

CHAPTER IV.

LETTERS FROM MR. TREMAINE AND DORRIS ROMILLY.

NEW YORK, November, 1877.

MY DEAR JUDITH, — I am rather hurried this morning, as I wish this letter to go by to-day's steamer. Mrs. Tremaine tells me that you are twenty years old. I think that you ought not to remain longer at school. I have written Fräulein Lütke to that effect, and have arranged matters so that you will have no difficulty about leaving. You can come home to us with Mrs. Emmons, who will sail on the 8th of January; or I have a proposition to make which will perhaps be more welcome to you.

Your cousins, as you know, have gone to Russia to spend some months. They would be glad to have you with them. Dorris spoke to me about it before she left America, and I have no doubt Fräulein Lütke can find some one to accompany you from Vienna to St. Petersburg, should you decide to go. My advice to you is not to lose this opportunity of seeing Russian life. Your Cousin Alice married well. Count Piloff belongs to one of the best Russian families, and is in a position to introduce you into the court society. I should like you *to become better* acquainted with Dorris, as your

father and hers were more warmly attached than most brothers. Dorris is a woman whose friendship will be beneficial to you, and I know they will all try to make you happy. If you are not contented, of course you can come home when an opportunity occurs.

I have no time to write more to-day. Hoping to hear immediately when you have decided which course to pursue, I am

Your affectionate guardian,

JOHN TREMAINE.

NEW YORK, Nov. 30, 1877.

MY DEAR DORRIS, — I am sorely perplexed. I have received a letter from a young man in Vienna, — Roger Fisk by name, — who is studying medicine abroad. Since his sojourn in Europe he has met Judith, and claims to have an undying love for her. He is twenty-six years of age, has no money, and cannot marry for years. He says that Judith returns his affection, but will give no promise without my sanction.

I have written to him, of course. I told him that my ward was too young to enter into any engagement; that in another year she would be her own mistress, but that, meantime, I could not consent to her making him any promise.

I am at a loss to conceive how these mutual confessions were made, when I supposed Judith to be in a strict boarding-school. I am shocked at this revelation, *and cannot think* of keeping her longer in such guardian-

ship. I have decided, after much reflection, to accept your proposition, and let Judith join you in St. Petersburg. She is old enough to leave school now, but I have no doubt she needs a watchful eye over her. I wish you would do what you can for her, and write me your ideas on the subject. I shall feel at ease when she is twenty-one, and my responsibility will be at an end.

When you reply to this letter, — which I hope will be soon, — tell me what you think of the Tsar. I have a great sympathy for that oppressed Russian nation, and its efforts to free itself from the yoke which presses so heavily upon it. If you have witnessed any ceremony in which the Tsar took part, I should be glad to have you describe it to me.

With love from Mrs. Tremaine and myself for you, your sisters, and Thomas, I am

Your sincere friend,

JOHN TREMAINE.

December 14.

MY DEAR MR. TREMAINE, — I can only admire your ingenious way of getting rid of an irksome responsibility. Because Judith falls in love with a young man, you send her to us to be cured. I shall not find fault with you, for your ward proves to be a delightful companion; not the foolish, love-sick girl my fancy would have painted her if your letter had arrived before she did; and I can commend *the course you have* taken, from the bottom of my

heart. We are a most harmonious quartette. Grace is always placid and happy. Tom is the perfection of a traveller, never objects to roughing it, laughs at his own blunders, — and he makes plenty of them, — and never does anything to make himself disagreeable except thinking all the shopkeepers are cheats, and carrying our letters about in his pocket for an indefinite length of time ; I might say that his memory is his weak point. I have no need to describe myself and how much I add to the party : modesty forbids. Judith is a light-hearted, happy girl ; she stands Tom's teasing and my scolding like an angel. As far as I can judge, she is quite contented, and does not appear to regret any object or person in Vienna. We have a very sober, staid Englishman here, a most unimpressionable creature, but he has succumbed to Judith's fascinations and is a willing victim. You need have no fears for her. It is to be hoped the young man in Vienna is as easily consoled. I have no doubt he is ; still, I don't see why she should not marry the poor fellow if she wishes to.

Having finished the business part of my letter, I will proceed to answer your other questions. I have seen the Emperor several times driving in a small sledge, entirely unattended, and wrapped up to the nose in furs. Once a day he goes to the Summer Garden, where he walks for half an hour. The day he was expected to arrive from Moscow last week, I stationed myself at the window about ten o'clock. The street from the station to the palace was lined with soldiers. I heard loud *cheering, and* suddenly an open carriage swept by like

the wind. It contained the Emperor and the Tsarevitch; there was no one on the box except the coachman. They were followed by about two hundred officers on horseback, but they went by so rapidly that I only got a confused idea of brass helmets, waving feathers, Cossack caps, and long spears. Then came several carriages from the palace, coachmen and footmen in the imperial livery of scarlet and gold, and then many scattered horsemen. The Tsar went at once to the church and thence to the palace. Perhaps you are astonished to hear me say they went in carriages. Before I came here I never imagined a carriage in St. Petersburg — certainly not in December. But the truth is, the snow, which is constantly falling, is not allowed to accumulate; it is continually being taken up and carted off to the Neva, so that it is not more than an inch or two deep in the street, and the sidewalks are comparatively clear. What a contrast to New York! One can always use a carriage here with comfort.

I think there is but one opinion about the Tsar, as far as he is personally concerned. Even his enemies acknowledge that it is only the power he represents which they wish to destroy. It seems to me no one could look at this Emperor, and not acknowledge that, if expression indicates anything of character, he is a good and conscientious man. His position is by no means an enviable one, nor should I care to be one of his ministers. They receive threatening letters all the time, I hear; and the Chief of the Third Section — appointed *in the place* of General Mezenzeff, who was

stabbed in the streets last summer — has been warned that the life of his only little girl will be attempted.

Such is the respectable and humane course which these Nihilists, with whom you pretend to sympathize, take to attain their ends. There must be many good Russians who desire a more liberal form of government. Their cause would be mine were I a Russian subject, but I have no sympathy with the Nihilists, or with the principles which they avow.

Last week there was a grand review of all the troops about Petersburg (Russians drop the "St.") on the Champs de Mars, a large open field near the river. We went with Nicolas and Alice, to witness it from the windows of the Oldenburg Palace. The Prince of Oldenburg is related in some way to the imperial family, but I have not yet studied the "Almanach de Gotha" sufficiently to be quite sure of these relationships.

From the window in which we were placed, we could overlook the whole field, where the soldiers had been drawn up since eleven o'clock, although the review was not to begin until twelve. There had been a slight fall of snow the day before, which froze during the night; so the ground was very slippery, and the horses, which had not been newly shod, had some difficulty in keeping their feet. The white ground and the gray sky made an outlook which was anything but cheerful. Apparently the men found it cold waiting, and, not content with jumping up and down to warm themselves, they chased each other about and performed various gymnastics.

Punctually at noon, cheers resounded along the lines;

a band at one end began the national hymn, which was taken up by the other bands in turn; the soldiers fell into place; and, looking intently far down the line of gray overcoats which covered the brilliant uniforms below us, I saw a crowd of horsemen approaching: as they came nearer I distinguished the Emperor on a gray horse, followed by his brothers and sons, and his staff, which consisted of about one hundred horsemen. I have no doubt there were many famous men among that retinue.

The Tsar was closely followed by the two Cossacks who went through the war with him, and always accompany him when he is on horseback.

After riding past the troops he took up his position on one side of the field, surrounded by his generals and military *attachés*. Here he remained while all the regiments filed by.

These troops did good service during the war. The Chasseurs lost one man out of three in the fight before Plevna.

A fat, jolly-looking priest, in a purple gown, was pointed out to me as having crossed the Balkans with the Simeonovsky regiment, last winter. On one occasion he was separated from the others, and found himself surrounded by Turks. Tucking his Icon under his left arm, he picked up a musket from the ground and laid about him with it, braining the first man he struck.

At the head of the cavalry came a motley crowd of a hundred horsemen, who at once attracted our attention. They carried a quantity of richly decorated weapons, of various *antiquated* shapes, and no two were dressed

alike. Steel or gilt trappings covered the horses, each of which was caparisoned differently. They were unmistakably eastern, and somewhat barbaric in their appearance. This was the Emperor's bodyguard, composed of men from the Caucasus. Each province is required to furnish a certain number; each man provides his own horse, saddle, uniform, etc., hence the curious and picturesque variety. They are extremely proud of their position, and consider themselves the bulwarks of the throne and indispensable to the Tsar's comfort and safety.

The Don Cossacks were equally curious and interesting, sweeping by on their small horses, which seem a part of the rider, — their hats jauntily cocked over one ear, with long, thin feathers sticking up in the air, and their short, crooked swords in attitude of attack. They do good service with these little swords, as many thousand flying soldiers in Sulieman Pacha's army last winter could testify.

The Cossack is an utterly free and independent fellow. He pays no taxes, but is required to serve in the army when needed, and to furnish a certain number of permanent troops. He serves without pay, and "keeps himself," which means that he takes what he wants wherever he finds it. The Tsarevitch is the nominal head, or Hetman, of all the Cossacks. Their loyalty is unquestioned, and they make excellent soldiers for some purposes, though each one is fond of skirmishing about on his own account, with little regard as to where his regiment or commander may be.

I looked curiously at the noses of the Paulovsky regiment. I had been told that the Emperor Paul, having a snub nose, founded this regiment for men with a similar misfortune, but I failed to discover anything peculiar about that feature in the present troop.

The review lasted an hour and was a very interesting sight; but I will spare you further details, and write no more except to beg you to get over your sympathy for the Nihilists as soon as possible. You have no idea of their diabolical plans; the information you get from newspapers, and especially from England, is quite untrustworthy. Their statements are colored by prejudice, so do not pin your faith to any of them. You see I have not been idle since I came to Russia, and have really picked up a good deal of information, but I fear I bore every one I meet with the number of interrogation points that I put in my conversation.

With love from us all, believe me

Yours sincerely,

DORRIS ROMILLY.

CHAPTER V.

DORRIS'S JOURNAL.

December 15.

I HAVE always thought it a most foolish thing to keep a journal, — a habit worthy only of a school-girl; yet here I am writing as busily in mine as though it were an act of remarkable wisdom. One thing I can say in its favor, — it is a wonderful safeguard. Having confided thoughts and feelings to this faithful friend, I long for no other confidant, and my most insane ideas are safe from discovery so long as the lock of my book remains good. It seems to me that in the future I shall be very glad to refresh my memory by reading over these pages, and perhaps to entertain my friends with extracts. I am writing with a view to that. All things considered, I must confess that my prejudice against diaries was a foolish one; I dare say I have others quite as foolish, but if time only cures me of them as effectually as it has of this, I shall be satisfied.

Many things have happened since I wrote last. Most important of all is Judith's arrival. Finding that she was to start last Monday with some friends, Alice proposed that Judith should stay at her house until we could *decide upon an* apartment and get settled. So Alice,

Tom, and Nicolas met her at the station, while Grace and I waited impatiently in Alice's library, where the lamp with its crimson shade made us both look flushed and anxious.

"I am almost sorry we promised to stay and dine," said Grace. "Judith will probably be tired; I am sure we were when we got here. How badly this dress wears!" stroking her silk sleeve thoughtfully.

I was engrossed in imagining what my cousin would be like, and whether she would be a pleasant addition to our party or otherwise.

"Tom tells me," Grace went on after a pause, "that he has found at last an apartment which will exactly suit us."

"Did he look at it himself?" I asked. "You know he thought the palace, with three drawing-rooms, library, dining-room, breakfast-room, banqueting-hall, ball-room, and two kitchens, was just the thing for us."

We both laughed, and Grace responded. "Yes, and such bedrooms that none of us would have consented to sleep in them! I wonder why all the houses we have examined have such miserable bedrooms. They don't look as if they had been built for sleeping-rooms at all, but are simply used for that purpose because one must sleep somewhere."

"Those were old houses. Alice says there are comfortable bedrooms in the modern ones."

"I wish we could find a modern one then," sighed Grace. "It is such a stupid way they have of pasting up *a bit of blank white* paper in the window, when

rooms are to be let. I know we don't discover half the vacant ones that are to be had. Why don't they advertise in large letters, as we do at home? And this fashion of living on the second floor is very uncomfortable: it is tiresome to go up stairs so often. I am sure," she went on, without awaiting a response from me, "that the servants will cheat us abominably when we begin housekeeping."

"Grace! Grace!" I cried, "don't paint everything in such dark colors."

She smiled faintly, and left me to my own thoughts for a few minutes. Then I heard a carriage stop, heard the Suisse (I wonder why he is called the Suisse when he is always a Russian) run out, open the front door, and ring the bell which summons the servant to the door of Alice's apartment. Presently they were in the room, and Grace and I were kissing Judith, and declaring she had changed so that we should not have recognized her.

She is changed, but for the better in every respect. I had plenty of time to observe her at dinner, and I think she is the loveliest girl that I ever saw. I wonder what it is that constitutes her charm. Her figure is round and graceful, but not remarkable; her head is well shaped, but the masses of yellow hair are too heavy for it; her eyes are dark-blue, but not particularly large or brilliant; her black lashes are neither long nor curling; and her nose certainly turns up. The only undeniable beauties she has are her teeth and her complexion, which *is more like a rose*-leaf than any skin I ever saw. Perhaps

fascinating would express her more correctly than beautiful. When she laughs she is irresistible. I fell in love with her that first evening, and could do nothing but sit and look at her.

In the morning Grace and I insisted upon taking a drive in one of the peculiar sledges which are always standing about the hotel entrance. The sleigh, like all Russian sleighs, was very low, — the seat nearly on the ground, and extremely narrow, so that when a lady and gentleman drive together the latter is expected to put his arm round his companion to keep her from falling out. The driver is crowded into a tiny seat in front, and one of his feet, enveloped in a long white felt boot, swings gracefully outside, whether to serve as a brake, or because there is not room for it inside, I have been unable to discover. These drivers all have the traditional long beard and hair. They wear dark-blue coats, plaited into the waist, lined with sheepskin, and buttoned up on one side. Besides the sheepskin lining, many of the pelisses are wadded; this gives, even to the thinnest of the wearers, a rotund appearance. They also wear large round caps, pulled down on the back of their neck, covering the ears, and trimmed with bands of fur. The light felt boots, of which I have spoken, complete the costume of the *istvostchik.*

The morning was crisp and cold, and the sunlight rather pale. We crowded behind our fat old istvostchik, and were fastened in by the robe, which was buckled to the back of the seat. The seats have no sides; and, while *the obliging hotel* porter was buckling us in, and

giving directions to our driver, Grace began to exclaim, "I cannot go! I shall fall out!" The hotel clerk, the porter, Tom, and two or three waiters stood there, trying to reassure her; and the horse, impatient to start, kept giving little jumps, at each repetition of which she renewed her outcries.

The seat *was* very narrow: I was not without certain misgivings myself. At last our fears were somewhat calmed; and, with many injunctions from us to the porter, and from him to the driver, to go slowly and be careful of the corners, we started, having learned the Russian for "Go home."

It seemed a perilous situation when we reached the Nevsky Prospect, where sledges were flying past us in all directions. Grace hung tightly to the driver's belt, calling out at intervals, "Prenez garde!" which, as the fellow understood no language but his own, caused him to grin, shake his head, and continue. He was very careful, and did not remonstrate with Grace, though I thought she would end by stopping his breath altogether, she clutched his belt so wildly.

We turned into the Quay, which is the street where Alice lives. It was bitterly cold; the corners were icy, and we slipped about uncomfortably. Our sledge was so low that the horses' mouths behind us were unpleasantly near our ears; but, fortunately, the Russian animals are kind, and the horses seldom bite.

I should not have been surprised to have been struck in the back with a pole, at any time. I saw that most of the people who were riding in sledges exercised their

hands continually, — now catching the pole of another equipage and turning it aside, now pushing away the face of a too familiar horse. Tears of laughter were in our eyes when we reached the hotel once more, and dismissed our istvostchik. "I prefer to have the whole sledge to myself next time," said Grace.

December 18.

I was sitting with Judith and Alice over their late breakfast this morning, when Grace came in, full of excitement, and begged us to come at once and look at the apartment which Tom had almost decided to take.

"I have ordered the sledge at two," said Alice, consulting her watch. "It is now twelve. You can wait very well until then."

"I suppose so," assented Grace reluctantly.

So we went into the library, where there was a cheerful wood-fire.

"What a pretty room this is!" said Judith. "I like that screen so much," pointing to one of carved wood, with ivy and other vines planted beneath, and running over it. "What a quantity of screens you have in this house!"

"It is a Russian fashion," responded Alice. "I don't believe there is a bed in Russia that has not a screen round it."

A servant appeared at the door, and announced something, which proved to be a visitor.

"Oh, Mr. Thurber!" exclaimed Alice, as a tall, very erect *Englishman* entered the room. "You have come

at exactly the right moment. I want you to know my sisters."

He bowed stiffly in response to her introduction. He was slightly bald, and made use of one eye-glass. I have discovered that he is younger than he looks; that he rarely laughs, and when he does there is a peculiar wrinkle in his nose, which I have learned to watch for with fresh interest every time anything amusing is said. He talks well, and seems to be quite unprejudiced, — for an Englishman. Either he knows a great deal about most subjects, or he makes a good show of a small amount of knowledge. I have seen people who did that. Certainly, I have not heard Mr. Thurber confess his ignorance on any subject. He was talking to me about pictures, when Judith quietly seated herself in a window, and looked out, leaving us to admire the smooth coils of yellow hair on the back of her head.

Mr. Thurber looked at her several times, as if he meant to speak to her. Finally he said, "I fear you will take cold in that window."

Judith smiled at him sweetly over her shoulder, while she answered, "I never take cold."

He pursued the subject as if she had said nothing. "The Russians never sit near a window. Will you take this chair?" drawing forward an arm-chair as he spoke.

Judith changed her seat with apparent reluctance. "Let us go somewhere," she said. "You and Dorris *have certainly* discussed Ruysdaal's sky to your hearts'

content. Let us go on an excursion. I have seen so few of the sights of the city."

"You forget," Grace suggested, "that we have to go to the new apartment when the sledge comes."

"Why don't you take Mr. Thurber there with you?" asked Alice. "He knows a vast deal about apartments," laughing. "He helped us to select this one, four years ago. Then he will take you to the American store, which you really ought to see. Won't you, Mr. Thurber?"

Our new acquaintance professed himself ready to be made useful or agreeable in any way, and we, in return, uttered all the polite speeches which were necessary.

"But why should we go to the American shop?" I remonstrated. "We did not come to Russia to see American things."

"It will remind you so pleasantly of your own country," Mr. Thurber exclaimed, with the suspicion of a twinkle in his eye.

"I don't know that I care to be reminded of my own country."

My objections were unheeded, however; and the sledge being announced soon after, Grace and I took the back seat, Judith and our English friend placed themselves opposite, the footman jumped up on the step behind, and we started.

It took us but a few minutes to reach the house on the Nevsky Prospect, where we found Tom looking proudly around him, as though he already owned the property.

It seemed odd to discuss domestic affairs before an entire stranger like Mr. Thurber, but it certainly made us quickly acquainted. Tom treated him as if they had been intimate friends for years. We went slowly through the apartment, discovering many advantages over other houses which we had seen. I was particularly pleased with two tall porcelain stoves, like Chinese pagodas, in the drawing-room.

When we returned to the ante-room, Tom pointed out with triumph a little winding staircase, which was concealed from view by a curtain. "You would never have discovered that, would you?"

"Not unless we had looked behind the curtain," I replied.

We ascended the stairs, and found two large, low rooms.

"These bedrooms will do for us," said Tom.

"I never will sleep up in this lonely spot," Grace cried, with a shiver.

I added my protest. "I prefer the room down stairs, which opens out of the butler's pantry."

Judith, however, declared that nothing would please her more than to occupy one of these.

Tom looked despondent for a moment; then his face brightened. He made us all follow him to the ball-room down stairs. "The old lady who lived here used this for her bedroom," he said, looking at Grace doubtfully. The room is forty feet long, and contains a balcony for the orchestra, with some ghostly white statues in it. Grace and I exchanged a glance of amusement.

Tom appealed to Mr. Thurber, showing him how, by the aid of screens and curtains, one could make quite a pretty series of rooms out of it. The latter assented, and even made some suggestions himself; and Grace finally said, in a resigned voice, —

"As we cannot do any better, I am willing to endure some discomforts; but I warn you, Tom, that you will have to search that balcony every night, for I am sure burglars could conceal themselves there."

"One never hears of burglars here," Mr. Thurber remarked consolingly.

"What is this?" I suddenly exclaimed, examining a small iron door in the wall. "A safe, perhaps." They all crowded about me, and gazed at the mysterious door.

"Have n't you seen those stoves before?" our English friend inquired. "If you search you will discover them all through the houses here. They impart warmth to the walls, and in that way keep the temperature even. The system of heating in Russia is the most perfect in the world. The double windows are put in and sealed in October, and fires are lighted early in that month, and are kept burning all winter."

"I see that you can tell me exactly what I want to know," said Tom, taking our new friend aside and talking to him in a confidential way, while Judith tried the piano, which was standing in the large drawing-room, and Grace blew the dust off some alabaster vases.

"Do you suppose," said she, tapping a table with a lapis-lazuli top, "that all these ornaments go with the furniture?"

"Tom said so."

"Well," drawing a long breath, "I wish we could find a furnished house to rent in New York with such beautiful things in it, and so reasonable in price."

"If we are going anywhere else," I ventured meekly, "we had better start at once, or it will be dark."

Tom refused to be torn away; but the rest of us got into the sledge again, and were driven rapidly off.

"How fat the coachmen all look," exclaimed Judith; "and how pretty it is to see them hold the bright-colored reins at arm's length, as if it required their whole strength to keep the horses from running away!"

"It is a singular fact," said Mr. Thurber, "that, although they drive at such a break-neck pace, they seldom use a whip."

"That is true," I cried. "I have never seen a whip used since I have been here."

Judith was looking over my head, far down the Nevsky. "This must be a troika!" she exclaimed, and we all turned to look at the curious vehicle which was approaching us.

There were three horses abreast, and the middle one was trotting briskly, while the others galloped. The harness had bells hanging to it, and was nearly covered with silver. The driver wore a light-blue velvet cap, three-cornered and silver-trimmed; and his pelisse was dark-blue, with silver ornaments. He had on a sky-blue belt, and the reins were of the same color. The sleigh, when it passed us, appeared very broad; in fact, there *were three people* sitting comfortably together on the *back seat.*

"Oh, how pretty, and how comfortable it looks!"

"You would be surprised to see how fast those horses go when they get into the country," said Mr. Thurber. "This is a troika belonging to a gentleman here in the city, as you may know by the livery. The public troikas are driven by men in the regular istvostchik's dress."

"What do you call this?" I inquired, as we turned out of the Nevsky, and met a pair of horses coming by with a free, airy swing, which was particularly appropriate to the scene.

"That is a *pristiaka*," said our new friend. One horse was trotting, with his head proudly raised, as if he felt that the eyes of the world were upon him; the other was attached by a single rein at the side, and cantered along, with his neck arched and his head turned out. One looked proud and conscious, the other playful and independent. Over the dasher and the horses' backs was spread a colored silk netting, the heavy tassels at the corners dragging in the snow, as we see them on all the private sledges here.

By this time we had reached the Neva, which looked like a great field of snow. We crossed on the ice to Vasili Ostrof, and drew up at the Yankee store. It was well worth a visit, we decided, if only to mark the contrast between the Tsar's capital and a New England village. One side of the room was filled with clocks, which were ticking as only American clocks can tick. These clocks, with lead pencils and canned goods, seemed to be the chief stock in trade. Mr. Thurber

asked the proprietor, in his stiffest manner, if these were all "Yankee notions."

"American inventions, sir, — yes, certainly!" was the reply; and our English friend subsided.

We took our departure, promising to call again when we began housekeeping.

During the day we had the most glorious sunshine I ever saw; the sky was as blue as an Italian sky. As we crossed the river on our return, all the trees in the Summer Garden were glistening like diamonds; each branch, covered with ice, stood out distinctly against the blue. What are diamonds and turquoises, after such a sight as that? In the west the sun was setting in a flaming glory of orange and red, and opposite the moon was rising in calm beauty. We held our breath while we looked. It lasted only a few minutes: then the sun dropped below the horizon; and shortly after the scene became so gray and cold that we shivered, and buried our chins in the capacious fur collars about our necks. The collars, caps, and beards of the istvostchiks whom we met were white with frost, and all the horses looked gray. St. Isaac's golden dome was the only warm spot in the view.

The bells began to ring for vespers, as we drew near home. They are so wonderfully soft and sweet that one could imagine they were ringing in heaven.

St. Isaac's was covered with frost, except the dome. It looked smaller to me than it is by actual measurement.

"*It is the* most beautiful church in the world," mur-

mured Mr. Thurber, as we stopped at one corner of the great square which surrounds it, and enjoyed the full effect of the building, shining with its many-colored marbles, its bronzes, its golden dome and crosses, and its monoliths of smooth Finland granite. These great columns at each entrance, fifty-two feet high, impress me more than any other part of the church.

"Have you been inside?" asked our English friend; and when we answered in the negative, he proposed taking a look at it.

We ascended the lofty steps, passed the massive carved bronze doors, and I found myself in a large, bare space, dimly lighted by a few candles. My disappointment was almost painful. I made no remark; and, as my eyes grew more accustomed to the obscurity, I became conscious of various prostrate figures about me, and some women holding up little children to kiss a holy picture.

"That, I suppose, is an icon," whispered Judith, pointing to a picture of the Virgin and Child, — the head and hands painted, the dress simulated by means of layers of gold. Flaming jewels were hung about it, and the whole was covered with glass and enclosed in a frame.

"Nearly all the saints in the calendar are represented here by icons," remarked Mr. Thurber. "These candles are kept burning before them always, to typify the soul, which never dies. Have you not seen icons in the houses?"

Judith shook her head. "I have been in no house, except *Alice's.*"

"You will find them in every peasant's hut," he continued; "and any one who enters salutes the icon before any member of the family. The jewels in some of these are magnificent," — moving nearer to one as he spoke.

"What a pity it is," I exclaimed, "that the church is not better lighted, so that the beauty and richness of it might strike the observer at once, instead of his being obliged to search for them."

For, little by little, new glories had revealed themselves to me. I stood under the great, dusky dome, and looked up at the masses of gold, bronze, and painting, which at first were merely vague shadows, but gradually made themselves visible, though the painting in the top, by Bruloff, was lost in the distance.

A man in uniform came up to us, and began to tell us in French to observe the iconastase at the east end. If there is any object in this world which is odious, it is a *commissionnaire*. He rattled off his lesson, telling us that the bread and wine were kept behind that screen; and when we would have made our way round to the back of it, he stopped us politely, saying that women were not allowed to penetrate into that *sanctum sanctorum*. So we had to be contented with a survey from the front. Doors of silver-gilt arabesque, in open-work, with mosaic pictures, and columns of malachite and lapis-lazuli compose the lower part. Above there is a mass of jasper, agate, porphyry, bronze, malachite, and painting.

"It is gorgeously beautiful," I sighed, "but if we *could only* have seen the back of it!"

My companions laughed, and we strolled out of the church. The moonlight lent to the exterior a new and gentler beauty.

Mr. Thurber bade us farewell, saying he preferred to walk home. He disappeared into the shadow, and we returned to our hotel.

CHAPTER VI.

SKATING AND RUSSIAN OPERA.

December 28.

I AM twenty-five years old to-day. I looked at myself in the mirror this morning, to see what changes there were since yesterday, and was surprised that "twenty-five" was not written on my features. I feel as though it ought to be.

I suppose it would be the proper thing to moralize somewhat on my birthday, but I don't feel in the mood for it. I must have the blues severely before I can moralize. And I have too many things to write about to-day.

I had heard so much of Sacha Novissilsky that I was curious to see him. Alice receives every Wednesday evening, and it was there that I met him first. Judith has met him often; but I have been so interested of late in making our apartment comfortable and homelike that I have shunned society.

After talking with me for some time, on Wednesday evening, Sacha said seriously, "I am sure, mademoiselle, that you have guessed my secret."

"Perhaps I have," I responded, decidedly mystified.

He continued, "I have never loved any one else, and *I never shall* care for another as I do for her."

I asked myself mentally if Sacha could possibly refer to me, but he soon undeceived me.

"Do you think she could ever care for me?" with a painfully anxious gaze.

"I don't know," I answered, rather stupidly. "Why don't you ask her?"

"I have so little to offer her," he said. "If she gave me a ray of hope, I could exist on that; but I fear to ask her, she is so beautiful and so much sought after," turning his eyes on George Piloff, a younger brother of Nicolas, who was hovering about Judith.

Now, indeed, light broke upon my bewildered brain, and I ceased to regard my young friend as a candidate for a lunatic asylum. He meant Judith, of course. George being one of my aversions, I shook my head, with an incredulous smile, and said, "I assure you there is not the slightest danger of your having Count Piloff as a rival."

"Do you think so?"

"I am sure of it."

"I wonder if I might tell you a secret?"

"Of course," I exclaimed. "I am the safest person in the world to tell a secret to." (I wonder if every one has this same idea about themselves.)

Sacha reflected for a moment, and then said mournfully, "I am afraid it would not do to tell you. But you are sure that your cousin does not care for him?" nodding towards George.

"I am sure of nothing," I answered tartly, determined not to *ask him for his* secret, but equally determined to

learn it somehow. "Only I don't see any reason why she should care for him."

Sacha sighed, "He is a gallant fellow."

"And is perfectly aware of it," I added quickly. This remark seemed to give Sacha new courage, and it was with quite a bright smile that he acceded to Alice's request to give us some music.

While he was playing, George stationed himself by my side. Presently he whispered, "What thoughts are absorbing you, Miss Romilly? One gets no attention from you. What are you thinking of?"

He speaks much better English than I do, and has the faintest possible accent.

"I am listening to the music," I returned indifferently.

He kept silence until the end of the nocturne; then, "Are you fascinated with Novissilsky's music?"

"Oh!" I cried, "why will you spoil it by talking?"

"Because I have so much to say to you," he responded eagerly. "There is a question which, as I know your word may be depended upon, I wish to ask you. Believe me, it is not mere vulgar curiosity which prompts me."

"I will believe all that you wish me to," I interrupted lightly. "What is your question?"

He looked at me reproachfully. "You seem to have but little appreciation of the importance of this matter. The question is about your cousin."

"*Judith?* I know so little about her. But tell me

what you would ask? If she is wealthy? Yes. Young? Yes. Amiable? Yes. What else?"

George was puzzled and annoyed, as his face plainly showed. He looked indignant for an instant. "I am sure you have more earnestness in your heart than the world sees," looking at me severely. "Otherwise, you are the last person to whom I would have come in my perplexity."

There was a subtile flattery in this which mollified me in spite of myself. So I turned toward him, and said seriously, "I will tell you if I can. What do you wish to know about Judith?"

For a moment he said nothing; then, looking at me firmly, as if he meant to read my answer in my eyes, he said, "Is she especially interested in any one? I mean, is she in love?"

I gave him as careless a glance as I could command before I answered. I looked at his black hair, which is plentifully sprinkled with gray; at his high, white forehead; let my eyes wander down to his short, dark beard, parted, and brushed away from his chin; admired for a moment the clear red and brown of his skin; and wondered how he happened to have a straight nose, it was so different from his brother's. Then, as his cold blue eyes did not move from my face, I replied rather hesitatingly, "Judith has never made a confidant of me. I can tell you nothing about that."

"But you can judge somewhat. Is she a woman who, having given her word, would keep it?"

I looked at him with some surprise, I suppose, for he

said appealingly, "Remember, I told you it was not idle curiosity which prompted me. I have a reason for asking."

"Whatever your reason may be," I responded haughtily, "you can hardly expect me to go into a discussion of my cousin's feelings and character with you."

"True," he answered most humbly. "I had no right to ask it, and I see my presumption now most clearly. I should not have come to you. I will seek my information from Miss Judith herself."

Sacha, having finished his performance on the piano, strolled over to us at this moment. "I am thinking," he said to George, "of the contrast between this scene and the one which was before us a year ago."

"Yes; there was some excitement in those days," responded the other.

"Were you both fighting Turks then?" I cried.

"I was fighting a fever," returned George; "but Sacha here was showing his valor in the face of the enemy."

"I wish you would tell me about it," I exclaimed, with awakened enthusiasm.

George laughed, with a nonchalant air. "The pleasantest part of those days was the coming home. Eh, Sacha?"

"Yes, indeed! That was a glorious day when we entered Petersburg. Picture it, mademoiselle. At the gate of the city there were about four thousand people. The grand-dukes and their staffs met us there; and a *kind of pavilion* had been erected, where all the grand-

duchesses waited for us. Most of the spectators were provided with flowers and cigarettes, which they showered upon us as we passed. A procession of priests met us, and a Te Deum was chanted in the open air, after which the commanders received bread and salt. As the soldiers went on through the city, their ranks were broken, and women and children were mixed up with the rows of bayonets. Mothers who had found their sons, girls their lovers, and children their fathers, walked quietly along, some of them sobbing and crying, while the bronzed faces of many of the men were working with emotion, and there was hardly a dry eye among them. An officer endeavored to put the intruders out of the ranks, but the Tsarevitch forbade it; so the mothers and sisters and wives marched the three miles with the soldiers, receiving fresh instalments by the way; and at last there was quite a crowd of families. Many poor fellows had been buried nameless in the trenches, and it was only when their places were seen to be filled by others that their friends knew that they would never come back."

Sacha positively waxed eloquent as he related this, and I felt almost angry with George for not displaying more emotion. "You were there too?" I asked him.

"No; I was at death's door with the fever, for the second time."

I could not restrain a smile. "You seem to have passed your time during the war struggling with fevers."

He laughed good-naturedly. "Very true; and extremely unpleasant it was, I can assure you."

"I suppose," said I thoughtfully, "that you are very fond of the Emperor."

"We adore him," responded Sacha.

George looked at me searchingly as he said, "Did you doubt it?"

"No, I can't say that I did."

"Listen, mademoiselle," broke in Sacha. "Let me tell you what our Emperor did last winter."

Tom had joined our group, and was now listening, with his eyes fixed on Mr. Novissilsky's face.

"After returning from the seat of war, it was his custom," — went on the young man earnestly, aware that he had an audience, and doing his best to tell the story well, — "it was his custom to visit the hospitals daily, and talk with the sick and wounded soldiers. One day he was speaking to a common soldier, whose wound was pronounced fatal. The Emperor asked the man what he could do for him. The soldier replied that he should die more happily if his monarch were with him at his last hour. 'Your wish shall be gratified,' said the Tsar. Before his departure from the hospital, he gave orders that at any hour of the day or night, when the man should be dying, he was to be notified. The same command was given at the palace. The man lingered for some days, but at last the image of death appeared to him, and a messenger was despatched to the palace about two o'clock one morning. He had some difficulty in penetrating to the Tsar, but finally succeeded. The Emperor hurried to the soldier's bedside, and, true *to his promise*, stayed by him to the last."

"It was noble of him!" I exclaimed, when Sacha stopped for comment.

"I could tell you many more anecdotes of that sort," continued the young man earnestly.

"But you are wanted by the Countess Piloff," said Mr. Thurber's voice above me.

As Sacha hurried away, Tom remarked in a dazed tone, "When that fellow gets wound up, it takes a good while for him to run down. His tongue has been going at the rate of a mile a minute ever since he left the piano."

"Tom," I remonstrated, "how can you speak in that way? He was very entertaining."

"He would drive me to commit suicide at the end of two hours," persisted Tom, as he walked away from me.

George had disappeared, and Mr. Thurber took the seat which he had vacated. "You are thoughtful to-night, Miss Dorris."

"You are the second person who has told me so, Mr. Chilton Thurber," I retorted audaciously.

"I must beg pardon," he said, "but really, you know, with two Miss Romillys, it is so confusing."

"You owe me no apology. On the contrary, I should thank you, for this is the first time you have ever called me by my name." I looked at him with a smile which was meant to be conciliatory.

"I believe I seldom call people by their names; but I like yours, because it was my mother's. I have never known any one else named Dorris."

His *voice grew quite soft* as he pronounced my name.

he was looking absently at the toe of one shoe, so my sympathetic glance was thrown away on him. He went on in a sort of soliloquy: —

"She died when I was so young that I cannot remember her at all; but I have always loved the name, and I never was more startled than when I heard them call you by it."

I looked hard at my companion. He was the same man, apparently; but what wonderful change had come over him to make him speak in such a sad, soft voice and tell me about his mother? I did not know what to respond. I could think of nothing but "Oh," or "Yes," or "Indeed"; and they sounded neither sympathetic nor appropriate. So I kept silent, and grew quite embarrassed, as Mr. Thurber did not seem inclined to speak first. Finally, he turned his gaze away from the toe of his shoe, — which, by the by, is altogether too pointed for any reasonable foot, as I shall tell him some time when we are conversing on more ordinary topics, — and, playing with my fan in a nervous way, he remarked, —

"Your cousin is a very beautiful woman."

I groaned inwardly. Was I to be confided in for the third time that night? It was growing monotonous, and yet it was funny, and I smiled. My English friend saw the smile. He colored slightly, and started up from his chair; then thought better of it, and sat down again. I turned towards him, and spoke in a low, earnest voice: —

"Mr. Thurber, the only reason I laughed was *because* — because — well, I have heard that remark so

many times this evening. She is beautiful, and I am very fond of her; so you must forgive me for smiling at your speech" (insinuatingly).

"I am glad that I amuse you," he responded, with an air of offended dignity.

"I hope you are not too much flattered by the fact," said I, — bent now on provoking him to the utmost, — "because it takes very little to amuse me."

"So I see" (briefly).

"I had no idea that Englishmen were so easily annoyed," I continued mischievously. "I have always imagined them cold and impassive."

Mr. Thurber struggled for his ordinary composure, and almost succeeded in grasping it, as he replied, —

"You seem to have had some odd ideas about my countrymen. Did you never meet any Englishmen before?"

"I have met quantities of them; but I never knew any of them well, — except one," I added hesitatingly.

"What did you think of him?"

"Not much."

"Did you see him often? Was it long ago?" (with a touch of eagerness.)

"I saw him every day, and it was very long ago, for it was when I was a young girl."

"What was his name? Perhaps I know the family."

"I don't believe you do," said I carelessly, "unless he used to make shoes for you before he left England. He is an old cobbler, who lives in the little village where I spend *my summers.* I used to go and sit with him at his

work, and he told me quantities of stories about his country. I always had a taste for low associates," I added calmly. "Alice was an aristocrat from her babyhood, but I was always a vagabond."

He looked somewhat astonished at my declaration, but I changed the subject abruptly.

"There is a frightful ordeal for you to pass through in a few minutes."

"What is it?" he cried, in feigned alarm.

"The baby is to be exhibited. I hear her coming now, and you will have to admire her."

"That is nothing very frightful. It will not be the first time I have done it."

"How difficult it is," I continued, "to induce a Russian nurse to show her charge; and if you say, 'How pretty the child is!' you have cast an evil eye on it, and all sorts of charms are used to counteract your influence."

"It is the same with an adult," responded my companion. "If you tell a Russian woman that she is looking well, it is a bad omen."

"Alice's nurse has always insisted upon it that the child was restless and unhappy all night after we first looked at it; and I believe she has borne us a grudge ever since."

This nurse, I must state, is a type of the picturesque figures which one is constantly coming upon in the streets here. She wears the Russian peasant costume, — a short, dark-blue skirt, with bands of red and white and black braid around it; a white apron, coming to the bottom of the skirt, embroidered about a

quarter of a yard deep, with red and blue cotton; a full white waist; wide sleeves, embroidered like the apron; a blue bodice; several strings of colored beads; and a blue or red tiara on the head, tied under the hair with broad ribbons, which hang far down the back.

January 7.

Yesterday was the Russian Christmas; but, as we had passed the 25th of December with no particular rejoicing, we did not feel much interest in celebrating the foreign festival.

On Christmas Eve — night before last — we went to a service at St. Isaac's. The church was crowded, and a large proportion of the worshippers were men, principally peasants. A strong odor of sheepskin and leather mingled with the incense. The people were extremely devout, bowing and crossing themselves frequently, — sometimes kneeling, and putting their foreheads on the cold pavement. There was an expression of rapt devotion on those peasant faces that I shall not soon forget.

The service was wonderfully impressive to me. It was in the Slav language, which of course I don't understand, but it would have been difficult not to feel devout while listening to the deep, rich tones of the deacon's voice and the sweet responses of the choir. There was no accompaniment, as instruments are forbidden in the Greek Church.

The clergy wore robes of magnificent brocade. Some of the bass *voices* were the finest I have ever heard.

The music was heavenly as it swelled through the great building. No wonder the *moujiks* were so quiet and absorbed. Compared with their monotonous and sordid daily lives, this gorgeous church, with its jewelled icons, its colored pillars, its gold, silver, and incense, and its priests in splendid array, must seem like some glorious vision in the Apocalypse. Their music is very old; some of it dates back to the fifth century. They have a sermon about once a year in the Greek Church. What a sensible custom!

January 9.

Yesterday we went to service at the English Chapel, which is on the Quay. It looks, on the outside, like anything rather than a church, being part of a block. The building is always crowded, for there is a large English colony here, and about a third of the congregation is composed of English governesses. The ambassador has a "high seat in the synagogue," on the right of the altar.

After church we had a long drive in the country. It was the most dismal excursion we have taken since we reached Russia. The day was dull, Judith was quiet, and Tom evidently homesick. It would have been touching, if it had not been so funny, to hear the despairing sighs which he heaved, and to see the doleful glances cast by him over the surrounding landscape, which certainly was not cheerful.

We went to the islands, the drive which is said to be so beautiful in summer, crossed innumerable bridges

over frozen streams, and were glad to envelope our heads in our coat-collars as we reached the Point and gazed out over the Gulf of Finland. Snow as far as the eye could reach, melting into a steely gray sky. No sunshine, but a faint, cold, pink light in the south.

Tom began, —

"This is the most enlivening spot — "

We all shivered, and cried in concert, "Don't!"

"Very well, I wont; but if you ever catch me so far away from home again — "

"You will add to your cold if you talk so much," cried Grace.

These were almost the first words Tom had uttered since we came out, as he meekly suggested, but his anxious wife muffled him up, and we turned our faces homeward. We drove through thick woods, the bare branches outlined sharply against the clear sky, looking now and then down long, snowy roads bordered with evergreens and ending in more woods. I could almost hear the wolves howl. Everything was as still as death. The country houses, with windows and doors boarded up and fountains frozen, looked silent and mysterious. When we reached home, Tom remarked that he did not see how Alice could live in such a country.

He did not regain his customary spirits until this morning, when Mr. Thurber induced us to go skating. At first I refused, but they urged me so strongly that I was obliged to yield.

Mr. Thurber, as a skating man, came out in an entirely *new light.* He was no longer a middle-aged per-

son with an elderly man's manner, a bald head, a cynical expression, and a tendency to sneer at everything. He was a young fellow under thirty, with a sealskin cap, a hearty laugh on the smallest provocation, a twinkle in his eye, and a disposition to cut capers! I could hardly believe him to be the same man.

He gave me no peace until I also ventured on the ice, where I tottered about helplessly, grasping his arm as though I meant never to let go. While I was getting very warm over my clumsy efforts, Judith was calmly gliding about. As we neared a chair, I fell into it, and waved my companion away. "I must rest," I gasped. "Go and skate by yourself."

He smiled a little, cut a figure eight backwards, and shook his head.

"I don't want to skate by myself," he responded. "I prefer your company to my own."

"Very well. That being the case, you can push my chair about, for it is cold sitting still."

To confess the truth, I feared he was going to talk to me about Judith, and I began to find having so many hopeful passions poured into my ear a little tiresome. I consoled myself by thinking that Mr. Thurber could not be particularly confidential to the back of my head, and that my cousin's name would rest for that morning.

False hope! For a few minutes my cavalier kept silence, and as I glided swiftly and easily over the ice I began to feel quite exhilarated; but my spirits were *soon* dashed by a glimpse of a new arrival, who was

making his way rapidly towards us. It was George; he came to a stand-still as he reached us, and so did my chair.

George merely touched the hand which I — forgetting that it was not necessary to go through the formality of shaking hands with a foreigner — extended to him.

"I have just come from your apartment," he cried, "and I found that some letters had arrived for you, which I took the liberty of bringing."

"Thank you," said I. "Mine can wait, but Judith is always impatient for hers. Is there one for her?"

"Yes," showing me an envelope with an Austrian stamp on it.

"This," I went on, examining mine, "is from Mr. Tremaine. He has become a most devoted correspondent lately. Judith and politics are his only subjects, so I will consign his letter to my pocket," suiting the action to the word. "By the way," I said, looking at the two gentlemen who were standing in front of me, "I wonder what would become of us all if we had not Judith as a subject to converse and write about. I know, Count Piloff, you are longing to ask where she is. You will find her somewhere on the other side of that island, with Mr. Novissilsky."

"Such a dismissal," cried George, with a good-natured laugh, "cannot be disobeyed." And, with a slight bow, he skated away.

The wrinkle in Mr. Thurber's nose made its appearance as he inquired, —

"Why *did you send him* off so suddenly?"

"He did n't mind it. I knew he would ask in a moment where Judith was."

"Indeed!" skating slowly round my chair. "Is he so fond of her society?"

"I think he is. But I must go in and warm my feet."

My companion made some polite remonstrance, but I refused to stay longer, and waited in the house on the shore of the lake for the rest of the party, reading Mr. Tremaine's letter meanwhile, to pass away the time.

When the others returned to the house to divest themselves of skates, and start for home, Tom called out to me, —

"We are going to the opera to-night; but I will tell you about it later."

I was willing to wait for my information, and resisted Tom's efforts to make me share my sledge with him.

"No, Tom. There is only room for one."

"But it is not proper for you to go alone!"

"Neither is it proper for a young man to go with me. Whichever way you arrange, it is highly improper," said I, laughing; "and as Judith is younger and handsomer than I, she has more need of a protector."

"I forgot Judith."

"I did n't, you see. Some one must tell my istvostchik to follow yours."

George gave the necessary instructions, and he and Mr. Thurber brought up the rear.

On reaching the house, they consented to come in and *lunch with us;* and when we were seated at table, I

learned that George had placed his aunt's opera box at our disposal for this evening, the aunt being in Moscow, and likely to remain there for the winter.

Daylight was almost gone by the time lunch was well over, and our friends took their departure, promising to meet us again at the opera.

January 10.

The days now are absurdly short. We breakfast at ten, generally by lamplight. For about four hours there is daylight, and sometimes a little sun, but shortly after two the lamps are again lighted. When it is cloudy, we have candles all day. The sun behaves in a very eccentric way. It rises over the left-hand corner of a block of shops on the other side of the street, called Gastinni Dvor, and it gets about two feet above that building, and then sinks down behind the right-hand corner early in the afternoon.

We reached the opera in good time, and found George and Sacha awaiting us. Shortly after Mr. Thurber and Nicolas came in. The whole performance was Russian. This particular opera is sung on all national *fêtes*, and was composed by Michael Glinka, — "La vie pour le Tsar," so Sacha translated the name for me. The plot is quite touching, and very patriotic, as explained by him. Tom was glad to listen to his account, in spite of the opinion he expressed the other day, that "Novissilsky reminds me of a hand-organ, he grinds out the same tunes so many times."

The *singing was only* moderately good. There was

an exquisite mazurka, and a polonaise, both of which are always played at the palace balls.

I was so engrossed in the piece that I forgot my companions until my attention was called to them by a low voice in my ear. I turned to see Sacha's dark eyes fixed imploringly upon me.

"What did you say?" I asked.

"That I am the most miserable fellow on the earth," he exclaimed, in a dramatic whisper.

Following the direction of his eyes, I saw Judith sitting behind the curtain of the box, with her head turned away from the stage, presenting her pretty profile to our view. She was looking at a couple of large, brown hands, which were playing with an opera-glass; and the owner of the hands, — George, — with head bent forward until it was on a level with Judith's shoulder, was talking earnestly to her.

That the subject of conversation was something absorbing, I could not doubt. The corners of my cousin's mouth quivered once, and she looked as if she were going to cry. Then came a sudden change of expression; she looked at her companion with one of her sweetest smiles; he smiled back at her, but, observing our scrutiny, frowned slightly, and sat upright in his chair through the remainder of the act.

"You see," whispered Sacha again, "it is evidently all settled."

I smiled inwardly, and wondered what this young man would think if he should visit America, and see a *flirtation* carried on in a scientific way; but I only said, "*I think you* are mistaken."

"Mademoiselle," he exclaimed earnestly, "I would change my whole nature to please her. But it is useless for me to play a game against George. He has money, rank, —"

I interrupted him hastily. "Those things count for little with Judith."

Sacha shook his head. "He is fascinating."

"Fascinating!" I cried, looking at George more critically. "Is he? I know he has had a great success in society. People urge him to come to their houses, he is asked to lead the dances at the palace; but I should never think of calling him fascinating. I grant that his manners are irreproachable, he is good-looking, bright, and entertaining; but it seems to me he is rather spoiled."

Tom had been making various pantomimic gestures for the last minute, so I stopped to ask him what was the matter.

"You talk too much," he said severely. "You disturb every one in the box."

After this rebuke I kept quiet until, at the end of the act, we adjourned to a small room adjoining, where tea and sandwiches were awaiting us. A box of bonbons was also produced by Nicolas, who said that a Russian lady never appeared at the theatre without that article.

When we had once more taken our seats in front of the box, Mr. Thurber murmured to me, "I fancy you would call that a flirtation in America," looking at Judith and George, who were almost lost in the shadow behind us.

"It depends," I responded calmly, "upon what they are talking about. I have known people to look as devoted as that, when no more sentimental subject was under discussion than the weather."

"What a vivid imagination you Americans must have!"

"I don't understand how your criticism applies," I retorted.

"Perhaps I should have said, what a power of deception, instead of a vivid imagination. It must require both to give such an expression of rapt attention to two people who are only talking about the weather."

I don't like Mr. Chilton Thurber when he sneers in this way. One must excuse anything, however, in a man who is jealous.

"I didn't say they were only talking of the weather," I asserted. "They may be making the most desperate love to each other, for all I know. But you are quite right when you say we have more imagination than the English. I have enough to conceive that you English may be very fond of your country, — even your foggy old capital, which it makes me melancholy to think of," I added, with a shudder.

"I am not particularly fond of England," he returned earnestly. "In fact, I prefer living abroad, — though not in Russia," after a short pause.

"Where?" I asked, with a look of laughing inquiry. "In what genial clime would you pitch your tent, if you had the world to choose from?"

He hesitated, then said, with a strange expression on

his face, "Wherever —" then paused, and added, "in Italy, I think."

"What were you going to say first?"

"Something foolish."

"I don't think so. It was certainly something wise."

"But you don't know what it was."

"Don't I? Will you let me guess?"

"By all means," Mr. Thurber answered, looking amused. "But you cannot know what thought was in my mind. It will be a mere guess."

"Never be too sure of anything," said I sagely, "especially of what a woman may know. We can often read you like a book, when you least imagine it."

"Can you read me like a book?" he asked, in a lazy way.

"Sometimes."

"I hope you will be interested enough to read to the end of the first volume."

"Do you wish me to tell you what you were going to say just now?"

"Yes."

"I am afraid," said I, "that I can't tell what words were in your mind; but I believe you were thinking of some one whom you love very much. Am I right?"

"Perfectly," he replied, with a smile which was somewhat nervous. "But your boasted imagination will not tell you whether she is dark or fair, tall or short."

"No. Still I should guess that she is tall, and fair rather than dark."

He laughed suddenly, with an air of relief. I waited

for him to tell me whether I had guessed aright, but vain ; so I turned to ask him, but Tom interposed.

"Dorris, I never knew you to be so inconsider Why can't you go to the back of the box, like Jud if you must talk?"

This effectually silenced me until the end of play.

CHAPTER VII.

STCHOUKINE DVOR.

January 12, 1878.

THERE is no possibility of denying that Judith is a coquette. It is the only thing I dislike about her. She is a dear, sweet-tempered girl; but sometimes I think she is perfectly heartless, when I see how she trifles with these men. I don't feel so sorry for George, because he is a thorough man of the world, and quite able to take care of himself; besides which, I have a strong conviction that if Judith cares for any of them, it is for him.

But poor Sacha is young and unsophisticated, and does not understand what the word flirtation means. He has my hearty sympathy, as has also Prince Tucheff, a vigorous sexagenarian, who is making, as Tom forcibly expresses it, "an old goose of himself" over Judith.

[redacted]is the conversation which I overheard between the[redacted] other day:—

"Blue," said the prince, looking at the dress which Judith wore, "is the color of the skies, and should be looked up to."

"Hear that!" whispered Tom. "He must be awfully [redacted]*rd up for a remark.*"

My cousin's reply was drowned in Tom's words.

The prince was speaking again.

"If I were as young as I once was —" and he looked unutterable things.

"I am glad," said Judith, flashing a coquettish glance at him, "that you are not as young as you once were. Very young men are great bores."

"Then I will say" (in a stage whisper), "if I could only make myself the age you prefer."

"Oh!" (dropping her eyes, with a little sigh.) "In that case, I should beg you to remain just as you are."

Tom and I moved away.

"What a fool he is!" murmured my brother-in-law.

Judith has been unmercifully chaffed about that conversation; but all of our ridicule fails to move her, or make her angry.

"I think he is a dear old man!" she exclaims, "and I *do* like him, just as he is."

At Princess Shermatoff's ball, last night, she was just as charming with Sacha as she had been with Prince Tucheff. After greeting the hostess, we passed into a large ball-room, and were lost amid a crowd of young women, who were filling up one corner.

Judith, having had one bitter experience, now avoids a sofa at parties. There is always a table in front of it, and there are always young ladies who seat themselves each side of you. A man who can converse with a girl across a table, when she is surrounded by others of her *sex, who* are curious to hear how Americans talk, has

more courage than any of my acquaintance. The young women flock together at evening entertainments; and, should any one gentleman talk more than ten minutes consecutively with the same girl, he might as well declare himself at once, — for that would be expected of him.

Waltzing was going on when we entered the ball-room. Sacha approached me, bowed so low that I could see the part in his hair, placed one arm about my waist, and danced me twice around the room, like a whirlwind. He stopped as suddenly as he had started, left me with another bow, in the same spot from which he had taken me, and passed on to Judith, with whom he did likewise. Another young man followed Sacha's example. Breathless and bewildered, I was whirled about the room by a dozen different partners in as many minutes.

The waltz continued for nearly half an hour. When it was over, the hostess and the gentleman who seemed to be directing all the dances came to me with partners, whom they introduced; and I soon found myself engaged for all the quadrilles. It is not the custom to engage partners for the waltzes; they are taken out of the crowd, as I have described.

Such fast dancing tired me, and, worse still, tore my dress. Couples ran into each other, without the slightest compunction; and, as most of the gentlemen were in uniform, many were the scratches which my poor arms received. I refused all invitations for the mazurka, and stationed myself among the mothers and chaperones, who lined the walls, and looked intensely bored. I was soon

joined by a foreign ambassador, who proved to be entertaining, and who remained with me until supper was announced.

The mazurka began about one o'clock. I have heard of dancing all my life, — have even flattered myself that I could dance well; but I never knew what real dancing was until I saw the mazurka. It is the poetry of movement. I shall never hear mazurka music again without having a mad desire to start up and dance down the room. The figures are like those in the German; but how different from our calm, lazy way of gliding to and fro is the sprightly air, the abandon, the rhythm, the grace with which these young Russians jingle their spurs, and, seizing the hand of their partner, look at her with glances which seem to tell all the admiration they fear to speak, while she returns the look, like a true coquette. They dance for pure love of the amusement, — not as if they were undergoing a penance, and trying to make the best of it. The music itself is enough to put life even into the coldest blood. The time is well marked by the piano and the heels of the gentlemen, which are brought down with a stamp.

Mr. Thurber, like an Englishman, sneers a little, and calls it theatrical. Certainly, both Englishmen and Americans are too self-conscious to dance it well.

After the mazurka, a hot supper was served in the next room. Sacha, not having been fortunate enough to get a partner for the dance, escorted me to the dining-room, and undertook to provide for my wants. I *had resisted* his efforts to talk with me all the evening,

having been much interested in my conversation with the diplomat.

To confess the truth, Sacha is getting too melodramatic to be agreeable. He looks as if all the pleasures of this world had passed away for him.

Swallowing his scalding bouillon without winking, he said severely, "Mademoiselle, I have been trying to speak to you all the evening."

"Yes," I responded dryly. "I could not get rid of Son Excellence."

"I have come to a determination," he continued. "I am going to speak to your cousin. Anything will be better than suspense."

"I quite agree with you."

"I thought that — perhaps — I knew — " he stammered, "she is so fond of you — I was going to ask you if you would talk with her."

I fixed a wondering gaze on my companion. "Do you mean that I am to ask her to marry you?" said I bluntly.

"Oh, no! I only meant that perhaps you could find out if there was any hope for me." He looked at me imploringly.

I knew there was no hope, but how could I tell him so calmly? I had seen enough that evening to convince me that Judith was very much interested in George Piloff, and his feeling for her had been plain for some time.

Still I could not have the cruelty to dash this young fellow's hopes at one blow. I thought Judith would do it so much *better; she* was probably accustomed to it.

I finished my bird leisurely, and took a sip of champagne, before I answered. "I think it would be much better for you to ask her yourself. Judith is very reserved, and I doubt whether she would confide in me."

He shook his head mournfully, and took a large mouthful of salad. "Then I must venture all, and it must be done soon, mademoiselle," turning his rather flushed face toward me. "Do you know what I shall do if she refuses me?"

As I confessed my inability to guess this interesting conundrum, Sacha looked down at his empty plate, and said solemnly, in a half-whisper, "I shall leave Petersburg!"

This threat did not make my blood run cold, as Sacha evidently expected; but I felt sorry for him, and regretted that I could not assure him of success in his love-making. If Judith were going to marry a foreigner, I thought she could not do better than take Sacha. I wished at that moment that she was safely at home with her guardian, and I had no further responsibility in the matter.

My friend entertained me during the remainder of supper with accounts of the various adventures which had befallen him by land and by sea, from the day of his birth up to the present time.

I began to grow rather sleepy, and I supposed that we were to take our departure immediately after supper. Alice informed me, however, that there was still a cotillon to be danced, and we had a repetition of the *mazurka,* which lasted until a distant clock struck five.

George danced this with Judith. He spoke to her a great deal in a low voice, and she blushed often and looked shy, which was a revelation to me, for I did not know that she was capable of such an expression.

A sudden idea struck me. Sacha had hinted at some secret which he possessed, — something about George, I judged from the way in which he spoke. Might it not be something which, if Judith knew, would prevent her from being drawn on any further?

Oh for a chance to speak to that unfortunate young man! If need be, I would drag his secret to the light. But he had gone home in dark despair, and my opportunity for that night was over. I was almost driven to retire to the ladies' dressing-room, where I had seen a package of cigarettes, and recklessly indulge in a smoke, for I grew so nervous that I could not sit still; but Alice dissuaded me by telling me it would be sure to make me ill.

Then I was tempted to confide my fears to Alice; but how could I, when I knew that she adored her brother-in-law, and thought that any woman who gained his heart would be fortunate above all others? In my feverish imagination, that secret of Sacha's took elephantine form. The last point was reached when I decided that probably George was already married to some one whom he did not acknowledge. It is fortunate that we took our departure at that moment, for I know not what I should have done in my perplexity.

I awoke this morning burning with zeal, and resolved to have *a severe talk* with Judith. A favorable oppor-

tunity was not long in presenting itself. It was twelve o'clock before we had finished breakfast, and then my cousin took possession of a novel, and I of the "Journal de St. Pétersbourg," and we sat down in front of the wood-fire in the library.

I cast many a sly glance at Judith before I gained courage to begin. She had on a brown stuff dress, and the toe of one pretty bronze slipper protruded an inch or two beyond her skirt. Her smooth braids and the rounded outline of one soft cheek were all I could see. She looked so dainty and sweet that I did not wonder that everybody wanted to marry her.

I watched the clock nervously, and saw that if I did not soon begin, Tom would make his noisy entry, and Grace would come in from her drive. So I said, in a low, meek voice, "Do you feel tired this morning?"

As I had already asked her that question once, she looked slightly surprised, but laid the book down in her lap, and said pleasantly, "Not very. Do you?"

How different she is from me, I thought, — how very, very different! I never can bear to be interrupted when I am reading, and never can answer any one pleasantly under such circumstances. How sweet-tempered Judith is, and what a contrast I must be! This thought saddened me, and I did not feel inclined to proceed; but as she seemed waiting for something more, I resumed the conversation and answered, "No." Then, growing sarcastic, "But I did not have such overwhelming attentions paid me as you did."

Judith turned a pair of laughing, mischievous eyes

on me. "I thought the ambassador was much more attentive than was proper!"

"Oh!" I sighed, "he has a large wife and grown-up sons. Judith," leaning my elbows on the table, and taking my chin in both hands, "you know Sacha is in love with you. Why don't you take the poor fellow?"

"He has never asked me," she answered dreamily, looking into the fire. "Besides, I don't like him."

"Why not?" I snapped the words out, full of a righteous indignation, and ready to defend my favorite.

"He looks so sentimental, and as if he were going to weep; and he watches me in such a way that it makes me nervous."

I leaned back in my chair, and, following Judith's example, looked meditatively into the fire. "It is true," I said slowly, "that he is somewhat irritating sometimes. But," I added with renewed vigor, "he is a thoroughly good fellow."

"I can't marry a man simply because he is good."

Then my ire was fully roused, and I looked at her with a glance which was meant to carry terror to her soul. It was lost on her, however, for she was still looking into the fire. "Can you marry a man simply because he is bad?"

"No," she answered calmly. "I don't think I could fall in love with a bad man." She looked at me curiously, came over by my chair, and sat down beside me on the floor, resting her head against my knee, and fondling my hand. "How solemn you are to-day, and how very *unpleasant*, dear!"

Such little caressing ways come quite naturally Judith. I always feel supremely foolish when I call person "dear"; but in her it is charming. I felt my ste resolution melting, but I determined to speak before was too late. "Judith," I said, in a mournful tone, "(you believe that George Piloff is a good man?"

She gave a slight start, and the cheek which had be resting on my hand was suddenly removed as she s upright. "Good!" she repeated musingly. "Perha I should not use that word in speaking of him; b surely not bad, Dorris?" looking at me anxiously, wi a question in her soft eyes. "Surely not bad, dear?"

I went on firmly: "I believe that he is a bad man.'

"Why?"

I was staggered for a moment. "Perhaps he is n really bad," feebly, "but he is at the club continual and every one says that all those young men at the cl gamble."

"You mean Mr. Thurber, not every one," correct my cousin quietly.

She was suspiciously calm. I began to warm wi my subject. "He is not the kind of man for you marry. O Judith, don't fall in love with a foreigne Please, please don't! Even the very best of them even Nicolas — cannot understand how women a treated in our country; and we expect so much mc than they can give, — than they know how to give."

My cousin's head was averted, but her hand st rested on my lap. She said, in a voice which had t *shadow of* laughter in it, "You forget that George liv

in America through most of his boyhood; that he was over twenty before he had ever seen Russia; and that since then his time has been spent equally in Paris, Vienna, London, and here. He is quite American in his feelings. And although he was in the army while the war lasted, yet his profession is really that of a diplomat, which makes a man a stranger in no country except his own." She turned her laughing face full on me. "You are very anxious about Sacha. It seems to me he is as much of a foreigner as George."

Somewhat discomfited, I responded, "I am not anxious to have you marry Sacha, nor any one; but it pains me to see you losing your heart to a man who has not one good quality to recommend him." By this time I was excited, and said more than I meant.

"Not one good quality!" repeated Judith. "Is that quite fair? What do you know about him?" with a bright color in her usually pale face.

"I only know what I judge from his manner and associates," I answered, rather ashamed of myself for having so little proof of George's worthlessness.

"Then," said my cousin, springing to her feet, and looking at me contemptuously, her small head proudly raised, "I consider you utterly mean, to malign a man's character when you know nothing about him! Are you not ashamed of yourself? If it will afford you any pleasure, I will tell you that I have not the slightest intention of marrying George, and that we are not in love with each other; but not one word which you have said has *had the slightest* influence on me. I consider

George one of the best friends I ever had." So saying, she swept out of the room with the air of an empress.

As for me, I felt very small. All my words rushed back upon me and overwhelmed me with mortification. I quite agreed with Judith in her judgment of me. What business had I to interfere with her, and what grudge had I against George? I never should be able to look him in the face again. If I could find any people who were going that day to America, I thought I would join them. Tears of vexation and contrition began to fill my eyes. As I forced them back, and tried to compose myself, Tom came bustling in, and with him — oh, horror! — George.

I had no time to make my escape, so I kept my disconsolate position by the fire, simply greeting the visitor with a cold bow.

"Well, Dorris!" cried Tom, "you look homesick." Rubbing his hands, he advanced towards the fire. "What's the matter! Here is George, come to take us — Where did you say you were going to take us?" appealing to his companion.

George's face seldom warms up for me as it does for Judith, and it was with a very cold expression that he answered, —

"Your sister wished to go sometime to the Stchonkine Dvor, and I thought this would be as pleasant a day as any."

"Grace has gone out in the sledge," I replied, "but she will be at home before half-past one, as we lunch at that hour. I know she will be disappointed if you *don't wait for her.*"

"Very well," interposed Tom. "It is one now. You can stay and lunch with us, and we will all go afterwards. Dorris told me yesterday that she was dying to see what they had in those old shops. I must see if Judy is up. Where is she?" and he hurried away before I could stop him.

George sat down near me, and, putting on his "society manner," which I particularly dislike, he said, "How did you enjoy your first Russian ball, Miss Romilly?"

"Very much."

"You seem rather depressed this morning," he continued, smiling at my doleful tone. "I hope it is not the effect of your gayety. The late hours which we keep are hard on foreigners at first, but one soon learns to sleep as well in the daytime as at night."

"I don't doubt it," I responded shortly.

He then launched forth into an account of the contrast between the balls at Vienna and those in Petersburg, which I felt he was doing to keep up the conversation. I tried to appear interested, and when Judith entered the room with Tom, she looked surprised to see us talking in such a friendly way. She cast a withering glance on me, and gave George one of her sweetest smiles.

Grace and luncheon were announced at the same time, but I could eat nothing; every mouthful choked me. Judith pointedly ignored my existence, and as pointedly devoted herself to George. She gave me several angry glances, and I sank further and further back in *my chair,* and felt that every one present won-

dered what had happened. Tom did not hesitate to speak his mind.

"Why, Judy," he cried, in a loud, jovial tone, "you look like a thunder-cloud! I declare, I never saw you out of temper before. If it were Dorris, I should not be so surprised, for she gets cross now and then, but she seems as if all the spirit had been taken out of her. Did you two quarrel when you were alone?"

I smiled faintly. Judith answered him in a freezing manner, and changed the subject suddenly.

As we rose from the table, Tom told us to make haste, for daylight would soon be gone. I walked to the window and looked out.

"Come, Dorris," Grace called.

"I am not going," I answered disconsolately.

"Not going!" exclaimed Tom. "Why, you are the one who has wished to go more than any of us!"

Tableau, — Tom, standing at the head of the table in front of his chair, which he has just pushed back; I, looking out of the window and playing with the curtain; Grace at her door, with her head turned towards me; Judith at the opposite door in the same position; George attentively surveying the sideboard, with his back turned to all of us.

Silence for ten seconds, during which no one moves. Then Judith comes swiftly toward me, and says in a low tone, which they all hear, —

"If it is on my account that you intend to stay at home, I beg of you to go, and let me stay."

"Oh, make it up, girls, make it up!" says my brother-*in-law's hearty* voice.

"Why not?" thought I. "I must do something, or I shall die of misery."

In a voice which was very tremulous, and broke in the midst of my sentence, I said, —

"I owe Judith an apology. I acknowledge that you were right this morning," — looking at her for the first time, — "and I *was* cowardly and mean."

"O Dorris!" she cried, all her dignity gone. "Don't let us — Come along!" pulling me towards the door; and we both made our escape, scarcely noticing what Tom was saying to George about his belonging to the family — reconciliation — tears, etc.

I felt very foolish when I came back, and thought the whole performance undignified and childish. Judith confessed to me afterwards that she had the same feeling about it. I soon forgot it, however, in the wonders of the Stchunkine Dvor.

It looks to the passer-by like a row of shops, two stories high, with a covered balcony, and here and there narrow alleys leading in behind the shops, where we caught glimpses of iron, wheels, coils of rope, etc. At last we turned into one of these paths, and then we found that the block was honeycombed with streets, — a city within a city. An odor greeted us which caused us to hold our noses; but we soon got accustomed to it, and George assured us that it was nothing worse than leather. The familiar icon with its candle was hung at nearly every corner. What a labyrinth it was into which we had suddenly penetrated! Books, jewelry, uncut gems, *sausages, religious* objects, Siberian shawls, dress

goods, fancy articles, pickles, icons, ready-made clothing, shoes, and Chinese goods were some of the things which were offered for sale. In rooms about six feet square, containing a show-case and counter, we found the most desirable wares. Most of the stock in trade was suspended on the walls, or tucked away in dark corners. There was a goodly array of booths in the streets, and men in greasy sheepskins stood outside and invited us to purchase. They did not seem offended when we refused to buy, but asked us to call again.

The atmosphere and general appearance of the place was so filthy and shabby that Grace was inclined to look upon it with scorn; but Tom grew very enthusiastic. He held long conversations with the vendors, in Russian, invariably tried to make bargains for things which he did not want, and was generally unsuccessful, — getting hopelessly muddled in his Russian, and appealing to George to help him out. A copper samovar took his fancy particularly; and, finding that the price was twenty roubles, Tom offered the man eight. By the aid of smiles, shrugs, and various gestures, the conversation grew quite animated; but the merchant refused to take less than fourteen roubles, and we left the shop, Tom extremely downcast.

"Because, you know, it was a bargain at fourteen; and I was an idiot not to take it."

We wandered through the alleys, and at the end of two hours found that we women had spent all our money, and Tom had only a few roubles left, — having purchased *some unset* turquoises, a pair of silver vases, a cigar-

stand, some old chains, six lamps, ten candle-sticks, four icons, and one Russian book. It was dark, and we turned our steps toward home. As we passed the samovar shop, the merchant waylaid us, and told Tom he could have the one he liked for twelve roubles. The offer was thankfully accepted.

I noticed that all of these merchants kept their accounts by means of a wire frame and colored balls, which they pushed up and down. I remember having one of these to play with at school, when I was a very little girl.

When we reached home, Grace announced that she was sure we had taken the plague, or some dreadful disease; and she was apprehensive all of the evening. Judith kissed me before we went to dinner, and I gave her a silver belt which I had just bought: so the reconciliation was complete.

January 15.

To-day has been gray and dismal. Low spirits, and the sense that I was unfit for any one's company, drove me out of the house the moment I had swallowed luncheon. What a curse it is to be subject to fits of the blues!

I struggled along in the face of a piercing Siberian air, — not strong enough to be called a wind, but cold enough to put life into my limbs, though my heart felt as if frozen. My poor little maid trotted after me, trying to keep up with my hasty steps.

Up the Nevsky I took my way, and scarcely noticed

my surroundings until long after I passed the Moscow railway station, when I became suddenly conscious that the pavement was wretched, and the shops extremely shabby. I stopped and looked about me.

Mathilde came panting to my side, exclaiming that mademoiselle had walked at least four miles, and that we were in a "très vilaine" street. I agreed with her.

The people who were passing us were workmen, peasants, and boys driving cows, and carrying tin horns four or five feet long, on which they blew tremendous blasts. The shops had a shabby appearance, owing partly to the signs, on which pictures of the articles offered for sale were painted, as well as their names in several languages.

Slightly puzzled at my surroundings, I walked more slowly, and allowed Mathilde to guide me. The object of my excursion was accomplished. The world no longer looked black and dreary. I began to think there was something for me to accomplish in life, and some people who loved me, in spite of my faults. Feeling comforted, I wended my way absently along, and my thoughts travelled far from my surroundings; so it was with quite a start that I looked at a gentleman who had sprung out of a sledge, and now advanced to speak. He was so enveloped in furs that I did not recognize George until he was close to me. His face wore an expression of disapproval; and, spending no time in preliminaries, he asked me where I was going.

"*I don't* know," I answered, without a smile. "I *believe* Mathilde is taking me home."

We walked on, and the maid fell behind.

"Really," said George, recovering his usual manner with a slight effort, "I should think you might have discovered some pleasanter place for a walk."

"Yes, I think I might," I responded, with a faint attempt at a laugh; "but I did not notice where I was going, and I found myself here at last."

He frowned, and bit his lip.

"You must have been absorbed in some pleasant thought."

"Pardon me," I interrupted; "it was very unpleasant."

"At least, it was absorbing?"

"Yes, I grant that. I was thinking of myself."

"I fancied you never did that" (in a tone which said that he never had paid much attention to the subject).

"I never do, when I have anything else to occupy my mind," I answered, as carelessly as he had spoken.

"Surely you don't complain of lack of amusement?"

"No, — I am not complaining; I am only answering your questions."

He smiled, and we walked on in silence for some time.

"Are you going to walk home with me?" I asked, at last.

"If you allow me."

"Then, can you call a sledge for my maid? She is not accustomed to such long tramps, and I fear she will be *utterly exhausted* when we reach home."

George hesitated a moment, then said, —

"I suppose you know that you are doing a very unconventional thing?"

"It is a matter of utter indifference to me. I don't wish to kill the maid, — that is all."

"You might drive home also."

"Yes, but I don't care to drive. I shall walk home alone if you desert me."

"Not for the world!" he cried hastily. "I shall be only too happy to accompany you."

He hailed a passing istvostchik, packed Mathilde in, and then surveyed me with a critical eye. "You are cold?"

I shook my head emphatically.

"You have a bashlik around your neck; put it over your ears, please."

I complied willingly with his request, for the air was piercing since the sun had departed and the early night had begun to fall.

We walked on briskly, and George, finding that his flow of conversation fell on rather inattentive ears, relapsed into a silence which was unbroken until we reached the canal bridge. Here my companion slackened his steps, and drew my attention to a little colony of Laplanders which we could see below us on the ice. Their tent of skins had an opening just large enough for a person to crawl in on all fours. A tiny team of reindeer stood near by.

"You can take a ride for two or three kopecks, if you like," said George. "But the poor reindeer suffer

so dreadfully from the heat here that they cannot go as fast as is expected of them."

I shivered. "Which is that personage I see down there, — a man or a woman?" The figure wore a long cloak, like a petticoat with a waist to it, made of skins, big felt boots, mittens, and a hat the flap of which covered the back of the head, ears, and shoulders.

George shook his head at my question. "I cannot guess. How calmly it sits there on the ice, as if entirely comfortable!"

As we walked on, he continued, "They will disappear when it grows warmer, as mysteriously as they came. No one ever sees them go or come. But you would better take my arm, for it is dark, and the people push one about so." We had reached the Nevsky by this time.

"I thought of doing that some time ago," I responded, "but you were so shocked at my unconventionality in sending Mathilde home that I was afraid."

"Not shocked," he remonstrated. "I only wished to remind you."

"Very kind of you. I see that you are one of that large class of men who think that women should be watched lest they take a step out of the beaten track."

This I said because it suddenly occurred to me that George and I were getting on quite amicably together, which was not at all as it should be, considering my dislike for him. To my surprise he made no reply, but sighed deeply. I waited. "Well?" I said at last, impatiently.

"Nothing," *with a little* laugh.

Walking along arm in arm seemed quite too much like good friends, I thought. "Then you do not belong to that class?" I persisted.

George turned his eyes on me coldly. There was a wrinkle between his brows which he often has when he talks with me. "I think we were getting on very well," he said, looking a little angry, "and that your desire to quarrel with me will be unsatisfied to-day."

"I assure you that nothing was farther from my thoughts than quarrelling with you," I responded, delighted to have vexed him, but rather ashamed of myself at the same time.

"Then let us talk no more about it."

His annoyance was only momentary, and I was quite silent until we reached the Anitchkine Palace, when I exclaimed abruptly, "It grows more of a mystery to me every day that Peter the Great should have selected this flat, marshy spot for a capital. Not a hill in sight, and everything built on piles!"

My companion laughed. "Is that the subject which has kept your thoughts busy during the last ten minutes? If you have read your guide-book, as all good travellers ought, you must have discovered why the great Tsar forced his people to come to this bleak corner of Russia."

"I have read 'Murray,' of course, but I found no such explanation."

"It is recorded that Peter the Great wished to have a *window* from which he could look out into Europe, *therefore he* founded St. Petersburg."

"It is a very cold window, and his view of Europe seems to be confined to the frozen waters of the Baltic," I remarked frivolously.

We had reached home by this time, and the Suisse hurried to unfasten the door. There is generally a mysterious smell of cooking about the entrance to his tiny room at the foot of the stairs, — cooking mingled with tobacco, — and a sound of smothered cries, strangely like those of a baby. Yet the family of our Suisse is supposed to dwell in a small tenement round the corner.

CHAPTER VIII.

AN IMPERIAL CHRISTENING.

January 17.

WHEN I told Alice of my long walk with her brother-in-law, she looked somewhat scandalized, and said she wished I would be more careful.

"Even a maid," she went on to explain, "is not considered sufficient protection by the Russian ladies; there must be a married woman or a governess to make walking perfectly proper. Many girls are not allowed to go out alone in their own carriages. That, of course, is absurd."

"I should think so!" I exclaimed indignantly.

"Russians are very particular with their daughters," Alice continued. "A gentleman never, under any circumstances, asks for a young lady at the door, and never leaves his card for her. The girls are not visible except on their mamma's reception days, when they preside at the tea-table."

"What a stupid time they must have!" said Judith. "But how well they speak French! Monsieur d'Echaud told me that the only way in which he could distinguish Russian French from Parisian was by a slight drawl in *the former*."

"They are obliged to speak it well," returned Alice, "it is used so much at court. The most wonderful thing about the Russians is, that they speak so many languages well. German, English, French, and Russian are considered only ordinary accomplishments."

"I don't understand how they can do it," I sighed.

"Poor Dorris!" laughed Alice. "Languages always troubled you more than any other study; and I fear your French would have been no better than your German, if you had not been educated by a French governess."

"It is a singular fact," I owned humbly, "that when I can read a language perfectly well, my tongue refuses to speak it. How unfortunate I should be, if I had not been taught French in my childhood!"

"It is time to start for the palace!" Alice exclaimed, and we hurried down to the carriage.

The occasion which called us to the Winter Palace was the baptism of the young Grand Duke Michael Alexandrovitch, son of the Tsarevitch, in which ceremony our cards of invitation indicated that we were to assist.

The day was perfect, — bright sunshine, the thermometer ten degrees above zero. I have to go through with a sum in arithmetic every time I look at the thermometer. To translate Réaumer into Fahrenheit is something which requires a talent for numbers.

Punctually at ten o'clock in the morning, the procession started from the Tsarevitch's palace. First, one hundred of the Emperor's bodyguard, — two platoons of them, stretching from one side of the street to the other. *Behind* them rode a solitary officer, and next

four grooms in the imperial livery. A gilt coach followed, drawn by six bay horses with gilt harness, and containing the Master of Ceremonies of the Tsarevitch's court.

A larger gilt coach came after the first, in which were the Cushion Bearer and the Blanket Bearer, — one of them being Count Kotzebue, the Governor of Poland, and the other Prince Suwaroff. Then appeared a third gilt coach. In this was the Mistress of Ceremonies of the Tsarevna's court, and the baby, — "L'Auguste Grand-Duc Nouveau-Né," — about whom all this trouble was taken!

The equipage which carried him had outriders. Each of the carriages had postilions, coachmen, two men in the rumble, and three servants walking in the road on either side, dressed in the imperial livery. Some of the more prudent held up the skirts of their long, fur-lined coats, as they marched through the snow, thus presenting rather an absurd appearance. Another company of Cossacks brought up the rear; and the whole procession went, at an impressive, funereal pace, towards the palace.

Judith and I were very gorgeous in our court dresses. It seemed almost a pity that we could not always present such a fine appearance. We both wore long trains, and our dresses were low in the neck, as etiquette requires for all court ceremonies.

We were admitted at the Door of the Council of the Empire. Many people were taking off their wraps as *we entered,* changing themselves from shapeless fur bun-

dles into ladies in glittering costumes, and gentlemen in uniform. We followed their example, and walked up the broad staircase of white marble with carved oak balustrades, finding ourselves confronted with two beautiful rosewood doors, ornamented with gilt, which opened at our approach. We passed into a long hall, with innumerable windows on the right, looking over the Neva, and on the left a conservatory, containing a fountain, palm-trees, and many tropical plants. A balcony, supported by pillars of white marble, added much to the beauty of this room.

Some Masters of Ceremonies advanced towards us. One was introduced to me; but I was so occupied in admiring the room that I only noticed the great height of my escort. I soon became aware that he was also very young, and that he was gazing at me in respectful silence.

"You must pardon me," I exclaimed, "for having so little to say. I am silent because I am anxious to see all I can."

He bowed gravely.

"I suppose this is the first view you have had of the palace, mademoiselle?"

"Yes; and I hope I shall see much more of it."

He smiled. "Your wish will be gratified; for we have a great many rooms to pass through before we reach the chapel. From here (walking to one of the windows) you see the race-course, where we have races every Sunday."

"*But that is the river.*"

"Yes; but the ice is so thick that there is not the slightest danger. You should go to the races while you are in Petersburg."

"On Sunday!" I cried.

"True!" he responded, in some confusion. "You are Protestant."

"Yes; and my sister would be shocked if you suggested such a thing to her."

"Will you come now?" asked my companion, seeing that the other occupants of the room had made a move.

We followed, and skirted the conservatory, turning into an apparently endless corridor, lined on one side with portraits of the Emperors of Russia at all ages. On the other side were windows looking into the Hermitage, and standards holding magnificent Sèvres vases. The rest of our walk was through a labyrinth of splendor, of which I retain only a confused memory. I have vague recollections of an enormous throne-room, with a raised dais for the throne; vistas of long passages, with arched ceilings and painted walls; a smaller throne-room; immense malachite vases; lapis-lazuli tables; rosewood cabinets, with delicate painted panels; ebony doors, inlaid with gold, silver, and ivory; pillars of marble and granite, from Finland and Siberia; a huge room with rows of silver candelabra, reaching nearly from floor to ceiling; marqueterie floors, polished to such an extent that it was with the utmost difficulty I kept my equilibrium; painted ceilings, mirrors, and pictures.

"It is certainly the most beautiful palace I ever saw," I exclaimed.

My companion looked pleased.

"And I suppose you have seen a great many palaces, mademoiselle?"

I was at a loss what to reply, for it had not occurred to me until that moment that this was the first palace I had ever entered. I hid my confusion, and answered carelessly, "Oh, yes! quantities."

Here, to my surprise, George presented himself. Judith having a gentleman on each side of her, perhaps he thought he could not do better than join me. He was in uniform, and looked very handsome, as I could not but acknowledge.

"I hardly recognized you, Miss Romilly," he said.

"I was about to make the same remark to you, Count Piloff."

"I feel like a monkey," he whispered confidentially. "I have had so little occasion to wear this dress for the last few years that I cannot forget my clothes for one instant."

"I am in the same state of mind. This train is nearly breaking my arm, and I am tormented with thoughts of how soiled my dress is getting, sweeping over these wooden floors. And, worst misery of all, my slippers are too tight."

"You unfortunate little woman!" he murmured. "That last fact is enough to ruin your pleasure for the day. You can stand on one foot and rest the other while the ceremony is going on."

"What a bond there is in affliction!" said I. "It is an *unspeakable* comfort for me to know that you are

conscious of your clothes; and if your shoes were only a little too small, I should be perfectly happy."

"If I had known that such a little thing could make you happy, I would willingly have worn a smaller pair."

We both laughed, and I suddenly realized that my "ceremonious man," as Tom called him, was still walking beside me, and might think us rude in holding such a long conversation in English before him. I begged his pardon, and asked him if he spoke that language. He was obliged to confess, with many regrets, that he did not.

"How much farther are we to walk?" I inquired. "We must have been half a mile already."

"We are nearly there now, mademoiselle"; and almost immediately we entered the chapel, where we found the members of the diplomatic corps assembled, the gentlemen in uniform, the ladies in court dress, — that is, *décolletées*, with long trains carried over one arm, as there was seldom room enough to spread them out. The gentlemen stood on one side of the room, and the ladies on the other, in the regular order of precedence as required by the law of etiquette.

At the back of the chapel was a gilt iconostase, ornamented with rich jewels. In front of this screen was the font. A gilt rail separated this part of the chapel from that where we stood, — typifying the goats, I suppose.

The choir, dressed in red robes trimmed with yellow, was already in its place. Presently the metropolitan of

St. Petersburg, in a white brocade robe trimmed with gold, and a tall, pointed hat, came from behind the iconostase, bearing an icon, and followed by a priest with holy water. About ten more priests succeeded them, in gorgeous dress.

Who would not be an emperor's grandson. My republican brain was so dazzled by this time that I had no thought of criticism. Judith looked calmly superior, — as if she had been accustomed to such scenes from her childhood, — while I felt quite plebeian; for I could not hide my wonder and admiration.

The priests passed us as they went towards the entrance of the chapel, where they met the Emperor, who kissed the icon, and was sprinkled with holy water. He then bowed to us: we returned the salutation; and he stood on one side, while each member of his family entered, and followed his example. The procession then walked to the font, and the imperial family took up their positions inside the gilt rail. After the rest of the party had passed, the baby, completely covered with cloth of gold, was borne in on a cushion by the Princess Kourakine. The trains of the grand duchesses were carried by pages.

The maids of honor and ladies and gentlemen belonging to the court now entered, and quite filled the chapel. George stood near me, with a cold, uninterested look on his face, his arms folded, and his eyes travelling about in all directions.

The service lasted over two hours, during which time we *were obliged to* stand. I could have borne this with

resignation, if it had not been for my new slippers and their pointed toes.

The Russian ladies were dressed in the national court costume, which is very pretty. It consists of a white silk or satin skirt; a low waist, long train, and wide, open sleeves of colored velvet; a tiara of the same color, — red seems to be preferred, — and a veil attached to the tiara, which falls down behind over the dress. Of course these costumes were more or less elegant, according to the materials and the jewels worn. The jewels at this court surpass any others in Europe. I am sure it would be safe to add Asia, also, but I have no desire to exaggerate; and, as I have never frequented Asiatic courts, perhaps I am not competent to judge.

The Grand Duchess Constantine has the finest jewels in Russia. On this occasion she wore a train of pearl-gray satin, trimmed with bands of wide Russian sable. The fur round the top of the waist was headed with diamonds, and fastened on one shoulder with an immense emerald. Her petticoat was also of gray satin; and three rows of velvet, thickly sown with all kinds of precious stones, extended from her waist to her feet. On her neck were strings of diamonds and pearls. Her tiara was covered with little diamond points, and her veil of rich old lace fell far down over her dress.

There was a great deal of chanting by the metropolitan and priests, and then the water in the font was blessed. The child was separated in some mysterious way from all his clothes, and plunged into the font three

times, head first. His nose and eyes were covered by the metropolitan's hand, but the "Auguste Nouveau-Né" cried like any ordinary baby, and evidently did not like it at all. He was then given to the godmother, wrapped up in blankets, and dozed quietly while another prayer was said. He was only left in peace for a few minutes, however. The priest presently anointed his ears, eyes, mouth, hands, and feet with holy oil, that none of those members should do any harm in life. When the little fellow had recovered from this interruption, and begun to calm down, he was again disturbed; all his hair was cut off and given to the godfather, who threw it into the font. The Emperor stood as godfather. Holding a lighted candle, he carried the baby three times around the font, accompanied by the metropolitan and the godmother, also with candles; and the choir chanted solemnly as they made the tour.

The Emperor passed a blue ribbon about the child's neck, investing him with the order of St. Andrew, after which he was taken away, and appeared no more during the services. The Tsarevitch came forward, and received kisses and congratulations from his relatives.

The exquisite Te Deum which the choir began to sing made me for a few minutes forget the jewelled ladies and ornamented gentlemen about me. All the bells in the city were ringing, and the cannon at the fortress was fired one hundred and one times.

The imperial family left the chapel, and we started to follow. My new friend, who had escorted me there, *inquired what I thought* of the service, and strolled on *by my side.*

"It all seems so odd to me," I ended, after a long eulogy on the music, the dresses, etc. "It is strange to think of one person's having a right to stand in a certain spot, while no one else must put the toe of his shoe on that spot. I could not help wondering what would happen if I, finding that I could not see what I wished from my position, should walk inside that rail, where there was plenty of room, and stand beside the grand-duchesses."

The young man looked rather startled. "Oh!" he cried, "no one ever goes there except the imperial family."

"I know," I answered, laughing at my companion's horror. "I had no idea of doing it. I only wondered what would happen if I did."

He looked relieved.

"I suppose everything is quite different in America?"

"Quite. No one takes precedence of any one else there."

This was somewhat puzzling to my young friend; but he was too polite to show that he disapproved of my country, so he refrained from criticism.

"It is a pity," he remarked, "that you will not see the Empress at any of these ceremonies. She is very delicate, and does not leave her own apartments."

"Are you discussing the Greek religion?" asked George, appearing just then at my other elbow.

"Nothing so important," I answered. "Only the difference between Russia and America."

"*That is* a prolific subject. Pardon me for inter-

rupting for a moment. I wish to call your attention to these walls. I don't believe Monsieur Cheremenieff has spoken to you about them."

I was glad to discover my new friend's name, though I forgot it again in a few minutes.

"No," I said, "I have not noticed them before, but they are very beautifully carved."

"Stucco!" exclaimed George. "Nothing but stucco. I suppose there is no country where the art of stuccoing has been brought to such perfection as in Russia. Most of the palaces and fine houses in the city are stuccoed. I can count the stone edifices in Petersburg on my fingers. Yet you Americans sneer at stucco."

We had been speaking in French, and Mr. Cheremenieff now put in a conciliatory word. "Perhaps you do not understand about it in your country."

"It is true," I answered, "that there are many things which we don't understand, and we are too ready to sneer at them."

"You acknowledge that!" cried George, laughing.

"I can willingly acknowledge our faults, we have so few of them."

"Dorris! Dorris!" cried the impatient voices of my relatives, "we are waiting for you."

This all happened yesterday. In the evening Tom and Mr. Thurber returned from a bear-hunt. They have been shooting those animals, in imagination, for several weeks. When it comes to the reality it is a very expensive amusement.

"*Not as extravagant as keeping a yacht,*" Tom protested.

"Indeed, I should hope not," was Grace's unsatisfactory reply.

Each bear costs at least one hundred dollars. You must buy a heavy sheepskin coat and felt boots, like those which the moujiks wear, besides the weapons necessary for killing and skinning the creature. Then you must employ two or three men to find a bear, and pay them for their time, which generally amounts to several days; and he must be watched while you are notified of his whereabouts. You take a railroad journey, hire a telega, and drive to the spot; and then if you do not shoot the bear in the eye, he gets away, and you lose him altogether, or one of your attendant moujiks kills him ingloriously for you.

It was late when the two gentlemen returned from their excursion. Tom began at once to relate his thrilling adventures and hairbreadth escapes, and it was some time before I had a chance to ask him where the bear was.

"The bear? Oh, yes! Well, do you know, Thurber shot the bear, and I never saw anything done better."

Whereupon Mr. Thurber became the hero of the hour, and poor Tom dwindled into insignificance. We are going to have bear-steaks for dinner, and the Englishman is to share them with us, — which reminds me that I must begin to dress.

Evening.

He came early, and found me alone in the library. *Upon his inquiring* why I was left in such solitude, I

told him that I had had so little of my own society lately that I felt like a stranger to myself.

"Ah!" he said, in a serious tone, "then I am intruding."

"Not at all. I am not fond of strangers, so pray do not go."

The characteristic wrinkle in my companion's nose showed that he was amused.

"I wonder if any one has ever told you that the tongue is a dangerous weapon?" he asked.

"I remember vaguely to have read it somewhere. But why? Do you wish me to be silent that you may talk?"

"Heaven forbid!" he cried. "I have been exerting myself in that way all the afternoon, and I came here to rest."

"To have a man confess that he comes to me for rest is a bit of flattery which I shall not soon forget."

"Really!" said my companion nonchalantly. "What does Mr. Novissilsky come to you for?"

"To talk about my cousin."

"Ah!" A moment's reflection, and then he added, "One would say, you know, that Count Piloff was a desperate admirer of your cousin's. George Piloff, I mean."

I looked at him with some surprise. Was Chilton Thurber degenerating into a gossip? However, I was glad to have some one to talk the matter over with, so I told him all I knew about Judith, beginning with her attachment to the young man in Vienna. I thought it

Mr. Thurber had any lingering fondness for her, it would do no harm to let him know that there were rivals in the field.

He was silent for some minutes after I finished speaking; then, —

"Why have you such a prejudice against Count Piloff?"

"Prejudice!" I repeated, vexed at being accused of such weakness. "It is not a prejudice. But I dislike his manner; and the fact that he is a foreigner is against him. I should be very unhappy if any one whom I loved were to marry a foreigner."

"Then you would advocate your cousin's being faithful to her first love," dryly.

"Certainly. I do not understand how a woman can change in that way. It seems to me that if I loved a man once, I should love him forever; and the women who are in love with a new man every year are generally those with very little character," I added with excitement.

My companion smiled in a superior manner, but refrained from contradiction.

"Every one likes Count Piloff," he said, after a moment. "Why should you not agree with other people?"

"Do you like him?" I asked boldly.

Mr. Thurber did not seem in the least discomposed by my question, but answered unhesitatingly, —

"Yes; I think him an agreeable fellow, excellent company, and not much like a Russian."

"*There spoke* a prejudiced Englishman! I would

rather have him a thorough Russian than a cosmopolitan. To speak frankly, I don't know why I should not like him, unless it is because he is so unconscious that one can look upon him with any feelings except those of admiration."

"I think that is simply a manner which every man acquires who goes into society so much as he does, and in so many different countries. If you knew him as I do, you would acknowledge that he is thoroughly trustworthy; and he has one quality which I have rarely found among his compatriots, or, in fact, among society men anywhere. I mean truthfulness. There was a time when I doubted him, but this virtue has been proved to me beyond dispute. I think you are unjust to him. From a worldly point of view Count Piloff is certainly all that can be required to constitute a suitable match for your cousin."

I sighed. "I cannot bear to think of Judith's marrying a foreigner."

Then I began to wonder what had happened to make Mr. Thurber talk so much to me and in such a confidential manner. Every time I see him he does something which surprises me. He broke the silence by saying, — "Does your antipathy to foreigners as husbands extend to Englishmen?"

Aha! thought I, I see what you are thinking of. Aloud I answered carelessly, —

"To a certain extent, yes. But although Englishmen do not make so good husbands as Americans, they come *nearer my standard* of excellence than any other for-

eigners. Fortunately, however, I have no authority over Judith, and in about six months she may marry whom she chooses."

"Ah!" murmured the impassive young man beside me.

After a moment he went on, with a strange tone in his voice, "I was thinking of you when I asked the question."

For an instant my heart stood still; then I concluded I must have misunderstood him, so I counted the stitches in my work calmly, and said, —

"I never think of myself in that way. As I do not intend to marry, I have no occasion to look upon any one I meet in the light of a possible husband."

Mr. Thurber sat up stiffly in his chair, and gazed attentively at me. I could feel his eye-glass, though I did not meet his glance.

"Why do you not intend to marry?" he asked suddenly.

"For reasons best known to myself," I said, with some asperity, adding afterwards, with a little laugh, "You force me to be rude in my replies. I can only tell you that I have good reasons, and that I shall never marry."

His face did not relax; he still gazed at me, and murmured under his breath, "Ah!"

I folded up my work slowly, and brought a newspaper from the table, which I handed to him, —

"There! I know you wish to read your 'Times.' I *have a note to* write."

He took the paper meekly, and after watching me curiously for a moment, became absorbed in its contents, while I tried to collect myself. It is the most surprising experience I ever had. Was it an offer, or was it not? No one knows but Mr. Thurber, and I strongly suspect that he will never tell me. I am afraid he is not very deeply in love, or he would not have been so easily repulsed.

CHAPTER IX.

EPIPHANY.

January 18.

WE have just returned from the palace, where we went to see the blessing of the Neva, which always takes place on this date. It is the Russian Epiphany. It was quite an interesting ceremony, or would have been so if I could have seen more of it.

A pavilion was erected on the border of the river opposite the main entrance to the palace, and a carpet spread across the road. There was such a crowd in the hall where we were that I feared we should not be able to get near a window; but Prince Tucheff procured a retired corner, from which we had a view of the street below. He stationed himself behind me and beside Judith, who never turned her head towards the window, and who, consequently, knows as much about the blessing of the Neva as she does about Greek. I could not avoid overhearing some of their conversation, as I was so near. I hailed the appearance of Mr. Cheremenieff with relief, for my position was growing embarrassing.

"Why don't they begin?" I asked.

"The service is now going on in the chapel below. At its close, the priests will go out upon the river. But

look at the crowd, mademoiselle! Is not that a wonderful sight?"

It really was. Rows of mounted policemen lined the path from palace to pavilion where the carpet was spread: behind them appeared a surging, swaying mass of human beings. At intervals of two or three minutes, as the people encroached on the path, the policemen forced them to retreat by spurring their horses into the heart of the crowd, and making them kick and rear; we could hear the screams of women, mingling with the dull roar of the mob.

"Oh!" I cried in horror. "Is any one killed?"

"I think not," replied my companion, with an easy smile.

"I feel like Marie Antoinette, when the mob was under her window at Versailles. I am afraid of that crowd."

"They are very gentle and patient," he said reassuringly.

"Yes, but there are so many of them!"

"I suppose you never see a crowd like that in America," said Mr. Cheremenieff.

How tiresome it is to be constantly reminded that you are a foreigner! One would think an American was an entirely different species from an ordinary woman. I answered, rather impatiently, "Oh yes, plenty of them," and turned my attention to the window.

A cheerful voice at my ear brought my eyes back to the room.

"*Is n't it tiresome* to wait so long?" cried George, giv-

ing a glance at Judith and her companion, as he accosted me.

"I don't mind it," I responded, "so long as I have something pleasant to talk about."

"But suppose you had not," he persisted, laughing. "Suppose all the pleasure which you had been looking forward to had proved to be only — let me see — don't you say Dead Sea fruit?"

"Yes, I say it sometimes; but I should think you rarely had occasion to say so."

He looked at me with a face which told that he was amused and surprised.

"How cynical you are! So life is supposed to be all bright for me, and all bitter for you?"

"I did not say that!" I retorted angrily. "I am not such a child. I only meant that I was subject to attacks of the blues; and I don't believe you are."

His gaze travelled past me, and out of the window.

"I misunderstood you," he said quietly. "Pardon me."

I always seem to be at a disadvantage with George. If I lose my temper, or make a foolish speech, it is sure to be when he is present.

I looked at him out of the corner of my eye, wondering if he were annoyed; and I sighed audibly.

My companion turned his eyes from the landscape, and glanced at me with a half-amused expression.

"What is the matter? Do you feel an attack of the blues coming on?"

"*It is nothing* to laugh at," I returned, with some

spirit. "If I were blue, I should not come to you for sympathy."

"Why not?"

"Because I think you have n't such a thing in your nature."

"Now, that, Miss Romilly, is extremely unjust. How can you know whether I am sympathetic or not? Do you think you understand me thoroughly, after such a short acquaintance?"

I could not determine whether he was in earnest or not; so I answered, at random, —

"No, I am not so rash."

"You have not told me why you sighed in such a dismal way."

"Because I was sorry for you."

"Indeed!" (amusement showing itself in his eyes.) "May I ask why?"

"You looked so melancholy, just then."

"That was kind of you," he said, smilingly. "If you knew what made me thoughtful, — I deny being melancholy, — you would not feel at all sorry for me."

"Then it is as well that I do not know?" I retorted.

"You never shall, if I can help it," he muttered under his breath.

"I beg pardon?" I said sweetly. "I did not hear."

"And I did not intend that you should" (with a grave smile). "But," he added, "I don't mean to be rude, and I *fear I seem so.* How forbearing you are to-day!"

"I am endeavoring to show you that I can sometimes keep my temper."

"You have proved that beyond dispute!" he exclaimed, with a hearty laugh.

"Count Piloff," said I, "will you tell me why there is nothing going on down there?" — indicating the road.

"Because the service in the chapel is not yet over. Patience is a virtue which those who frequent palaces must cultivate."

"Well, as there is nothing to look at outside, perhaps you will be good enough to tell me why you treat me as if I were a child?"

I said this rather frivolously, smiling at him as I awaited his reply. He hesitated for some time; then said, —

"I cannot imagine why I do" (in a musing tone), "unless it is because you seem such a child to me."

I gazed at him in astonishment too deep for utterance. He looked upon me, Dorris Romilly, — who considered herself quite a woman of the world, and was so considered by most of her friends, — as a child! Amazement kept me silent for the moment. I could think of no words strong enough to convince him of his mistake. When I did speak, it was to utter but a feeble protest.

"I am twenty-five, and I feel fifty."

This only made him smile again.

"You are wonderfully like a child sometimes," he *said at last;* "and the next moment you are a woman."

This soothed me somewhat.

"To-day," he went on, with a kind smile, "you have appeared in the former character. What you will be to-morrow is a mystery which I cannot fathom. Last Sunday, you were —" (he stopped suddenly).

"What was I then?" I asked eagerly.

He responded gravely, "Yourself."

I looked puzzled, as I felt.

"You wonder," he continued, with that look of quiet amusement which I had noticed before, "whether I mean charming or the reverse."

"I wonder nothing of the sort," said I quickly, with a warm color in my face.

"Think no more about it; for here comes the procession."

A number of priests, bearing banners, appeared below us; and every head in the crowd was uncovered, remaining so through the service, which lasted about fifteen minutes.

The priests were followed by officers, more priests, tattered flags, and the choir, which chanted all the time. They disappeared in the pavilion, and we could only hear the music. The cold was intense; and the men in the crowd rubbed their ears and their bare heads, as they listened in rapt devotion to the service.

Finding that I could see and hear nothing, I turned, expecting to find a vacant place, where George had been; but he was still there.

"I am so glad you have not gone," I cried, "for I have been *intending to ask* you a question for a long time,

and I never could remember it when I was with you. Why were you named George?"

"I am sorry if my name displeases you. But St. George was a great character in his day, and perhaps my mother thought I might resemble him," he answered, smiling. "You know our choice of names is limited, for each member of the Greek Church must be named for some saint."

"I did not know that you belonged to that church."

"I was baptized in it, therefore I suppose that I am a member. But I assure you St. George is altogether the greatest saint we have, and the Order of St. George is the highest in Russia. The first class of the order is given only to one who has commanded one hundred thousand men in a successful war. The Emperor and the Grand Duke Nicolas are the only persons in this country who have it. So I trust you will forgive me for having such an ugly name."

"I don't know that it is so very ugly," I replied thoughtfully, "when one gets accustomed to it."

"Try and become accustomed to it, then," said my companion, with a laugh.

"I ask a great many questions, I know," apologetically; then I added abruptly, "Where is every one going?"

"Into the next room for lunch, I fancy. Let us go too."

"I do not feel as if I had seen the Neva blessed, after all," I murmured, as I moved away reluctantly.

Later.

Alice and I have been painting from the same model, — a little Italian whom she found in the street. He is named Alberto, and he says that he came alone from Naples. He talks freely enough, but I have been unable to discover his reason for leaving the sunny land of his birth to visit this inhospitable climate. I asked him if the Russians were not very poor.

"Oh, no!" he cried, and went on to describe the moujik's life as quite a paradise compared with that of the Italian peasant.

There is such a depth of ignorance in the faces of some of these moujiks! I wish I could speak Russian; I should like to be able to ask questions, and learn something about this strange people.

"You Russians," I said to Nicolas the other day, "are so — I hardly know how to express it — so light. There seems no depth to you, no earnestness."

"You forget," he answered gravely, "that you only know the society element, which is much alike in all countries. Strangers come here, stay a year or two in Petersburg, and then go away and write a book, thinking they know all about us. What does a man understand of America who goes to New York and Newport only, and spends his time in society and at the clubs?"

"True," I replied. "It is unjust."

So I have given up trying to judge the Russians. I take them as I find them, — a kind-hearted, hospitable, cordial, highly cultivated nation; and I find them extremely *pleasant to* live with. The women look much

like Americans, and are unusually bright. They are pale, and remind me a little of hothouse plants. Large feet are the exception; even the peasants have pretty feet.

What strange creatures Englishmen are! Mr. Thurber, who spends two or three months here every year, seldom has a good word to say for poor Russia.

"At least," I remonstrated, "you will acknowledge that the Neva is a fine river?"

He pondered a moment, then replied, —

"Do you know, I think a river can be too large!"

January 19.

The pictures in the Hermitage, especially the Murillos, are my constant delight. I am very ambitious, and am trying to copy the head of the Virgin in Murillo's "Assumption." I wish I had taken something easier. Mr. Thurber comes in nearly every day to observe the progress of my work. His criticisms are too just to be encouraging.

This morning I induced him to leave the Spanish school, and look at the pictures by Russian artists, which we discussed in detail. Then, as I felt tired, we sat down in a window embrasure, and continued our conversation.

"How I long to see the gallery in Madrid!" I cried.

"Why do you not go there?"

"*That* would be so easy!" I answered sarcastically.

"*Nothing* easier," he remarked calmly. "When you leave here, take a trip through Spain."

I looked at him blankly.

"In the first place, Grace would not listen to the idea; but even if she went, it would not be possible for me to do so. You speak as if it were a mere nothing; let me assure you that it would cost a large amount of money, and I have none to spare. I am not an heiress like Judith; my income is very small, and a journey to Spain would be quite beyond me."

"I thought all Americans were wealthy."

"I dare say you did. That is a popular fallacy abroad. I believe I never met a foreigner who was not imbued with it."

"You still persist in calling me a foreigner?" he asked, with a half smile.

"You are one, you know, though of the least objectionable nation."

I got up, and we began to stroll towards the entrance, where the sledge was to come for me at a quarter to two.

"It wants five-and-twenty minutes to the hour," said Mr. Thurber. "You will have to wait."

"Never mind."

I sat down and watched a gayly dressed attendant, who was walking leisurely about.

"I wonder," said I thoughtfully, "whether there will be any servants in the house with whom I can communicate when I get home. If the butler is there, I can give my order in English, otherwise I must tell my maid in French, she will tell the footman in German, and he will tell the moujik or the cook in Russian. I

ordered some wood the other day, and they brought me hot water."

"I fancied that you had learned words enough to make your wants known."

"So I have, two or three times over, and forgotten them again. I never knew anything so easy to forget as Russian."

"Housekeeping among a people whose language you do not understand must be difficult."

"It would be, except that my sister lets the house keep itself. I doubt if she knows how many servants she has, and I am sure she is in a blissful state of ignorance as to where they eat and sleep. The moujiks are supposed to 'keep themselves,' but I never pass the butler's pantry that I don't see one of them eating, or drinking tea. To be sure, they get very small wages, so I don't blame them for picking up all they can."

"There is such an infinite number of them in every house which I enter," said my companion. "They seem to be employed to wait on the other servants."

"So they are. We have one for the butler, one for the cook, one to trim the lamps and take care of the fires, and one to polish the floors. I don't know the exact number, but I am continually coming upon long-haired and bearded figures, in high boots and gay-colored shirts, who draw themselves up against the wall and murmur 'Zdrasty' as I pass. I feel as if I were in a theatre all the time."

"On the whole, you would not fancy housekeeping in *this country?*" looking at me sharply.

"I don't say that," I answered impatiently, tapping my heels on the floor. "Why did we come here instead of stopping to look at the pictures?"

"Because you preferred to come down," he responded, with a touch of annoyance.

"Ah, here is Vasili!" I cried. "If you do not mind," turning to Mr. Thurber, "I will take you with me in the sledge. It is extremely improper, but if I wrap my collar well about my face, no one will know that I am not Grace; and a married woman may do anything she likes."

"I believe no one cares enough about me to criticise me," he replied, stepping into the sledge after me.

"It seems absurd for us not to go together when our destination is the same."

Reaching home, we found the family sitting over the remains of luncheon, George bearing them company. I fell to at once, with a good appetite.

Suddenly Tom exclaimed, "By the way, how did you and Thurber happen to arrive at the same instant?"

"Because we came in the same sledge, I suppose," I answered calmly.

"No!" cried Tom. "I wonder you were not afraid Thurber would run away with you."

"Don't try to be funny," I responded, peacefully eating my *kalatch*. "Mr. Thurber has had no lunch. Why don't you offer him some tea?"

"Will you give it to him?" said Grace. "Judith and I have to go out, and Vasili is waiting."

"I will"; and I approached the samovar, while Grace

and Judith took their departure. George went to the door with them, and then returned to his old position in front of the sideboard. I gave a sly glance at him, and thought he seemed depressed.

"Tom," I cried abruptly, "do you know what I was thinking of the other day at the christening?"

"No." My brother-in-law was all eager attention.

"I was wondering what Uncle John would have said had he been there."

Tom gave one of his hearty laughs, — not a "parlor laugh," as Judith says, but very contagious and pleasant to hear.

"I hope you did n't suggest that to Alice."

"I did, and she looked horrified."

"I should think so. You ought to see Uncle John" (turning to Mr. Thurber), "to appreciate this."

"He is a most worthy old man," I continued, "but not exactly the kind that one would wish to present at court as a relative."

"I don't know that he is a worthy old man," broke in Tom. "He is an old miser."

"But a good Baptist," I persisted. "He generally sits in the kitchen, with his feet on the stove, chewing tobacco, in the winter. In warm weather he occupies the 'pyazzy,' as he calls it, and goes without a coat."

"What an eccentric person!" remarked Mr. Thurber.

"Once a year," I continued, stopping to drink my tea before I finished the sentence, "he used to make a raid upon us. He came to the city for a change. He always arrived when we least expected him. He never

shaved oftener than once a week. What overcoats he wore! and oh, how ashamed we used to be of him!"

Tom and I laughed in concert, and George joined us. Mr. Thurber's face wore a polite smile.

"But if you slighted Uncle John," I went on, watching the Englishman intently, but telling my story in a half-laughing way, "he talked about your being 'stuck up,' and 'feeling big,' and 'he guessed he was as good as any one!' What a contrast," I sighed, "between him and the Grand Duchess Vladimir! So little pretension in her, so much in him! Uncle John would feel sure that he was as important a personage as the Emperor, if he were to come here. I would like to know what they would all think of him."

"Let us hope," said George, "that the old gentleman will not take it into his head to visit Russia."

I shuddered. "What a mercy that he is so stingy, else he would undoubtedly come."

"Has he much money?"

"I don't know. Tom thinks so, because he never spends any."

Mr. Thurber looked slightly bored.

"There!" I said mentally, "the story of Uncle John has disgusted him, and I am spared the disagreeable task of refusing him. Undeceiving him as to my being an heiress perhaps had some weight, but Uncle John has certainly turned the scales."

While I was reflecting on this, and finishing my lunch in silence, scarcely hearing what the others said, I found George watching me intently. Could it have been my

imagination which made me think he looked sorry for me? I cannot tell; the expression vanished so quickly that I hardly know by what word to describe it. I smiled as I met his eye, and inquired, "Why do you look at me so earnestly?"

"I am thinking," he answered slowly, "that undoubtedly you are a good judge of character; but do not make a mistake and judge too hastily."

Tom and Mr. Thurber were deep in a question of Eastern politics. I looked at George interrogatively. "What do you mean?"

"Only what I say," was his answer; and this was all the satisfaction he gave me.

CHAPTER X.

TROIKA PARTIES.

January 23.

WHAT is one to do with a man who will not take No for an answer? Ever since my conversation with Mr. Thurber, recorded on a previous page, he has constituted himself my *cavalier servante.* I never go anywhere that he does not follow; I never express a wish for anything that he does not attempt to gratify it. When he is talking to me, the other people who happen to be in the room leave us altogether out of their conversation; and when he joins us in our walks, I am invariably left to walk with him. In vain I struggle to impress people with the idea that I do not prefer Mr. Thurber's company to all others. I am met with an indulgent smile; and, most significant of all, Tom has ceased to chaff me! They all seem to take it for granted that we are in love with each other; and the cool way in which Mr. Thurber appropriates me is irritating beyond measure.

Alice had invited a few friends to dinner one night. She and Grace sat down with a sheet of paper and a pencil, to decide where the guests should be placed. I was about to go for a drive with Judith; but I determined to *give them something* to ponder over while I was out.

"I don't care how you seat the people," I said quietly, as I reached the door; then, turning towards them to give full effect to my words, "but if you put me beside Mr. Thurber, I will never show myself at another of your dinner parties." So saying, I left the room abruptly, and waited in the sledge for Judith.

There was a little pout on her face when she appeared. We were muffled up so that we could not move our heads; and my cousin's voice was almost lost in her capacious fur collar when she began to speak to me.

"You are ruining the dinner," were the words which at last reached my ears. "Russians do not like the English; and if you put him beside either of those Russian ladies, they will not speak to him" (the rest was lost).

"If you mean Mr. Thurber," I responded, "I don't know why he should have been asked at all. I did not want him; and I don't see why he cannot be put between you and Grace. You are not Russians, and you don't dislike Englishmen."

"But, dear Dorris! (earnestly) I have to sit next Prince Tucheff. Grace is on your side of the table, and will be on Mr. Thurber's right; and if he sits by me, George must go between you and Grace, and that will make things all wrong."

"Oh!" I cried, with some asperity, "let him sit next me, by all means. I prefer him to George, if I must have a choice of evils."

"I think," said my companion, "that you might have confessed your preference for Mr. Thurber at once, in-

stead of playing indifference. I knew you would not be satisfied unless you had him."

Her gay laugh rang out on the frosty air.

"Judith," I responded severely, "your remarks are not only in bad taste, but they are unkind. Why every one" (growing peevish in my tone) "should take it for granted that I am in love with that Englishman, I fail to see!"

I knew by Judith's voice when she replied that she was smothering her laughter. "Because you are so touchy about him."

"Nonsense!" cried I sharply, and then subsided into silence, which seemed to be my only refuge.

When we reached home we found George in the anteroom, bandaging the leg of a brown setter, of which he is very fond. His occupation was so absorbing that he noticed us only by a bow; and we joined the group of admiring moujiks who were watching the operation. The leg was apparently badly injured; and George was as tender as a woman in his way of handling it, and even to my unpractised eye betrayed much skill. Slowly and carefully he finished his task, then made the dog lie down, and turned his attention to us.

"An experienced surgeon could hardly have done it better than that," he said to Judith; then addressing me, —

"The dog was run over just under your window, and I brought him in at once. I hope you don't mind my making a hospital of the house?" with a smile.

"*Poor fellow!*" said Judith, addressing the dog,

before I had time to answer. "Will you leave him here?"

"Oh, no. I shall take him with me."

"But you are coming in first?" I said, walking towards the drawing-room door.

They both followed. Judith, seeming to be possessed with a spirit of mischief, immediately began to speak.

"Dorris and I have just had another quarrel."

I smiled. I had almost recovered from my annoyance, so I could afford to do so.

"A very serious one!" I exclaimed, tossing my hat on a table, and pushing my hair away from my forehead, while Judith sat down, and began slowly to pull off her gloves.

"One of you," said George, "is a dangerous person to live with, — or is it both?"

"It is Dorris, of course."

"Quite true," I responded meekly. "I am generally in fault."

"Oh, I was only joking," cried my cousin. "One cannot quarrel alone. But," she added, with a loving little smile, "we don't disagree much, after all. I am not afraid of Dorris: I tell her what I think, and then she forgives me. A quarrel with you," turning to George, "would be a much more serious matter."

He was looking over some photographs which lay on the table, and paid no attention to Judith's remark, except to say, in rather an absent manner, "Why?"

"*I think*," she answered reflectively, "that it would

take a great deal to make you angry, but that when your wrath is once aroused, it is deep. I should say it would be difficult for you to forgive."

He was looking attentively at one of the pictures, turned it round to see the artist's name on the back, and then showed it to me. "When did you have this taken?"

"Just before I left America."

"It is very poor." And before I could say "Thank you!" he spoke abruptly to Judith: "So you think that I am unforgiving? What does Miss Dorris Romilly think?" playing absently with the photograph, and speaking as if his mind were somewhere else.

Judith broke in, as I was hesitating what to reply, "I know what she is going to say. She is preparing to tell you, in her most sarcastic manner, that she has never thought about it at all."

George laughed, with a tinge of bitterness.

"Why should she think about it?" looking at me with what seemed like unnecessary earnestness. "I was insufferably conceited to imagine that she had given an instant's attention to such an insignificant subject as my character."

"If I had done so," said I, smothering a yawn, "doubtless you suppose that my judgment of you would be different from Judith's."

"Yes," resuming the study of the photograph. "If you have any opinion of me, I should say it was not a favorable one."

"*Why do you say that?*" I asked, beginning to feel *interested.*

"If I answered that question, I should be wandering very far from the original subject of conversation, for I should tell you something about yourself."

"Oh, pray tell it!" cried Judith. "I would like to hear it."

"Perhaps Miss Dorris would not."

"Disagreeable truths are generally useful things to hear. I am not afraid of them," said I, in an indifferent tone, leaning my head against the back of my chair and half closing my eyes.

"This is not very disagreeable," pursued Count Piloff, biting his mustache, and looking at me rather uneasily. "I was only going to say that you impress me as a young woman who wraps herself in cold indifference, and looks down from the pedestal in calm criticism upon us, poor struggling mortals. As I am a vast distance below your level, you would naturally find much to condemn and little to commend in me."

He stopped; I opened my eyes to their widest extent, and gave him one look; then tried, unsuccessfully, to resume my nonchalant manner. He met my glance coldly, with a half-smile on his face. He could have said nothing which would have made me so angry as to insinuate that I set myself up as superior to all the world. That was unmistakably his meaning, politely expressed.

Inwardly fuming, I strove to be outwardly calm as I answered, after a moment's pause, during which both of my companions looked at me expectantly, "You were *right in saying* it was 'not very disagreeable.' You

only mean that I think myself better than other people. I dare say that is true."

"Indeed, it is not true," cried Judith indignantly. "The only trouble with Dorris is that she sees her faults too plainly for her own happiness."

"Well," I said, laughing, "I must be a very enigmatical person, to call forth two opinions so exactly the opposite of each other."

George looked from me to Judith, and from her back again to me, with a covert amusement in his face which puzzled me.

"I know you better than Count Piloff does," insisted my champion, with a brilliant red spot in each cheek.

He smiled. "You asked me for my opinion, Miss Judith, and now you are finding fault with me for giving it."

"No, not for giving it; for having such an utterly foolish one."

Here we all laughed, and Judith said, "I insist upon your telling him what you think about him, Dorris,— whether you agree with me that he is unforgiving."

"But has she not already allowed that she has never given the subject a thought?"

"No," said I hastily; "it was you who said that. I did not agree to it."

"Very well, then. Let us hear it."

"I was only going to say," I began slowly, "that you have too little depth of feeling to be unforgiving. It is not so politely expressed as your opinion of me, but it is quite as flattering."

A slight tinge of red mounted to George's forehead, and a look which I should have called pain in any other person, but which in him I translated vexation, came into his eyes. He spoke at once, quite earnestly, —

"You are very, very much mistaken, Miss Romilly. I almost wish you were right."

"You know nothing about each other," said Judith quickly, "and the best thing you can both do is to become acquainted immediately."

"Miss Romilly will never become acquainted with me, — she has too great a contempt for me," said George, with a laugh from which all trace of vexation had vanished.

"Count Piloff will never know me any better, — he considers me too self-righteous," said I, resuming a careless manner.

Presently he threw down the pictures which he had been fingering, started up, and came over to my chair, looking down on me with a thoughtful smile. "You have no idea how happy I am."

"I am glad, but I fail to discover the cause," I responded, looking up at him inquiringly.

"Because," gazing at me critically, as if something about me interested him, "I am to take you out to dinner to-night, and then I shall have an opportunity of showing you — if you are open to conviction — that my feelings are deeper than you think."

"How do you know you are to take me out?"

"Alice told me so. She said that you were so sensitive as to a certain young man whose name has been mentioned once or twice lately in connection with yours,

that of two evils, — his company or mine, — you chose mine."

Judith began to shake with suppressed laughter. Count Piloff leaned against the mantel, and looked at us both as if we were interesting studies of human nature.

"What are you laughing at, Judith?" I asked.

"Nothing, only —"

A look of responsive amusement flashed into the young man's eyes. "Perhaps your cousin used the same expression that I did about the two evils?" he interrogated Judith.

She burst into a peal of laughter, and I, feeling very red and foolish, was obliged to join her. At last she began to make apologies. "But you see — it was so funny! I *will* tell him, Dorris. He thinks we are so rude to laugh this way. Besides" (looking at George, who was perfectly grave), "you will not mind, I am sure, if I tell you. Dorris said —"

"Judith," I remonstrated, "this is childish!"

She paid no attention to me. "Dorris said that of two evils she chose the least, which was — Mr. Thurber."

We laughed no more. Judith was too much frightened, now that she had said it, and I was too vexed. I did not look at George, and for an instant he said nothing. Then in his ordinary manner he remarked, "I am disappointed: now Miss Romilly will always think that I have no feeling. I must run away and hide my diminished head," he added, taking his hat from the table.

Conquering my pride, and walking up to him with a smile which was meant to be conciliatory, and holding out my hand, I said, "I am very rude sometimes. I hope you are not as unforgiving as Judith thinks you are."

Taking my proffered hand, he answered, "Even if I were, it would be easy to forgive you for preferring Thurber to me. I shall see you this evening. *Au revoir*," and he was gone.

"O Judith," I cried, "what have you done?"

"I know it," she responded, looking somewhat frightened and very penitent. "I am so sorry!" putting an arm round my waist. "Never mind; it will do him no harm."

"But it sounded so ill-bred of me," I returned disconsolately. "However, I will not make myself unhappy about it."

"I don't think he cared," Judith added consolingly. "He did not seem to care."

That was not what I feared. I knew that no remark of mine could have the power to wound George's feelings; but I did not wish any one to think me rude.

But the occurrence had almost ceased to trouble me when, at seven o'clock that evening, we arrived at Alice's door and joined the other guests. There were only a few minutes for conversation before dinner was announced, and Mr. Thurber took possession of me. We followed the others through a large *salon*, stopped in a small room preceding the dining-room, where a table was spread with caviare, sandwiches, cheese, dried fish, *vadka*, and some cordials.

"This is the *zakouschka*, I suppose," I said inquiringly; and Mr. Thurber assented.

"It is expected to sharpen the appetite," he added; "but I advise you not to try it with a view to that effect. You will be unable to enjoy your dinner."

"Why don't we sit down for this repast?" I asked.

"Because it only occupies a few minutes."

"Well, I like caviare, and I shall take some, please."

Before I had finished the plateful which he brought me, I was obliged to abandon it, and follow the others into the dining-room.

Much to my disappointment, the dinner was not characteristically Russian. The people who give dinners in Petersburg have French cooks, so there is no opportunity to taste the national dishes. I felt like doing something exciting; a spirit of recklessness entered into me, and I looked about for a good opening. Talking with Mr. Thurber was commonplace; I was too far from George to begin a discussion with him, — besides, he looked too coldly indifferent to be aroused. On my left sat a handsome Russian. I discovered, after a second glance, that he was the same person who had been so attentive to me at the Grand Duke's christening. A sudden thought struck me, — I would make Mr. Thurber jealous!

I turned at once to my Russian neighbor, and began a lively conversation with him. He was rather young, and I tried several subjects before I found one on which it pleased him to talk; and that subject was — postage stamps! *The collection* which he had, and that which

his brother had, and that which he hoped to have in the course of years, all this was poured into my sympathetic ear. I inclined my head towards him, listening with an air of absorbed attention, and hardly stopping to taste the various articles which were placed before me. I presented the back of my head persistently to Mr. Thurber. I hardly looked away from the young Russian, and he neglected his other neighbor shamefully. Once or twice I cast a furtive glance at Judith; but she did not meet my eye. Once I caught George actually scowling at me; but he turned his eyes away quickly when I looked at him.

Towards the end of dinner, I concluded to see how Mr. Thurber bore my neglect; and, bracing up my courage to endure the sight of his wrath, I turned towards him. Grace was next on his other side, and then my friend, the ambassador. Mr. Thurber was sipping his champagne, and replying to some remark of the latter's.

"Undoubtedly, if the tax were put in that form, it would be more beneficial."

"What form?" I inquired.

He started. "I was discussing a subject of slight importance to you ladies," he answered calmly. "But I intended to ask you what you thought of this claret. I find it delicious."

"I have not noticed," I replied.

His manner was the reverse of annoyed. He seemed pleased with himself, with me, with every one, and, above all, with the claret. Decidedly, my plan for making him

jealous had not been a success; and I now found Mr. Cheremenieff and his stamps doubly tiresome.

I was eating my ice in silence, deserted for the moment by both neighbors, when Mr. Thurber's voice broke upon my ear: —

"Russian women are extremely brilliant, and are also good talkers; but there are no women as beautiful as Americans, you know."

I was forced to admit that he was right, judging from those who were present. "What a pity," I exclaimed, "that they do not always behave as well as they look!"

"Do they not?" asked my companion.

"What an unnecessary question for a man who has travelled as much as you have!"

At that moment Alice rose from the table, and we were obliged to follow her example. The gentlemen accompanied the ladies back to the drawing-room. Mr. Thurber looked at me inquiringly.

"Do you allow me to follow the Russian custom?" he asked.

"What custom?" said I, somewhat puzzled.

He pointed to Prince Tucheff, who was kissing Judith's hand, and murmuring something about "mille remerciements," and who repeated the performance with Alice. All the gentlemen followed his example, thanking the ladies whom they had escorted, and then the hostess in the same manner. The Russian ladies also approached Alice, shook hands with and thanked her.

After watching the others I turned to Mr. Thurber, who stood at my side, the picture of patience.

"Hand-kissing is a supremely foolish custom. Don't you think so?"

"Yes," he answered impassively. "I do."

Visions of this stiff Englishman kissing my hand ran through my head, and amused me. Coffee was served, and Mr. Thurber wended his way to the smoking-room, with most of the gentlemen and one of the ladies. Judith brought her cup of coffee over to where I sat, on a tiny sofa, and placed herself beside me. She fixed two lustrous gray eyes on me, with an indefinable expression in their depths.

"Dorris Romilly," she exclaimed earnestly, "never, never as long as you live, talk to me again about being a coquette."

"What do you mean?" I asked stupidly. "What are you talking about?"

"You! The way you ignored that poor man's feelings, and encouraged that uninteresting little boy until he entirely lost his head!"

I laughed softly. "I was only trying to create a little excitement, but I did not mean to excite you."

"Excite me! Why, I was simply struck dumb. You, who scorn a flirt! You, who have lectured me by the hour together for things not half as bad as this! Upon my word, Dorris, it is too bad, when you know that Mr. Thurber is in love with you."

"But he did not care, after all," I said dolefully; and looking up, I saw that a part of our conversation had

been overheard by George, who stood patiently awaiting a chance to speak.

"Are my services required as peacemaker?" he asked.

"You are to scold Dorris for having suddenly developed into a coquette."

"I cannot," he answered gravely, "for I don't think she has."

"Then you did not observe her at dinner?"

"I beg your pardon. I observed her very closely; but I have also noticed her on former occasions, and I don't think the quality has developed suddenly. All women are natural coquettes."

"I cannot listen to such nonsense," said Judith, while my face burned painfully, and I mentally pronounced George more disagreeable than usual.

"Will you come and see that collection of arms which we were talking about?" he asked, with a sudden change of tone, looking at Judith.

She immediately rose to follow him.

Turning to me he added, as if it were a second thought, "Will you come?"

"No, thank you," I answered ungraciously, keeping my seat, and helping myself to a cup of tea which was offered me.

The guests soon began to take their departure, and by half-past nine no one was left there except the family.

"I suppose we must go home too," said Tom reluctantly. "Do your dinner-parties generally break up *as early as this?*"

"Generally," responded Alice; "but don't go. We wish to talk over our troika party."

Tom was all enthusiasm immediately; and before we left it was agreed that we should meet at Alice's for our troika ride, at nine o'clock the next evening.

When the night came it was bright starlight, and the mercury stood ten degrees above zero. We started in seven troikas, shortly after nine. Our driver wore the traditional peasant's cap; his face was deeply bronzed, while his beard and hair were a few shades darker. Madame Kirovieff, — who is five years my junior, as I afterwards discovered, — Tom, Mr. Thurber, and Sacha, were in the vehicle with me.

We were wrapped up to our eyes, our feet put into fur muffs, the robes tucked in about us, and off we started, with a yell from the driver and a whoop from Tom. That young man behaved as if he were not more than ten years old. He screamed at the driver in Russian, — of which he knows about six words, — and every time I opened my mouth to remonstrate, he insisted upon it that I should take cold if I spoke, and drowned my voice in a sea of warnings.

Once outside the city, with a clear road ahead, the driver emitted a series of whoops, and started the horses off at a rattling pace. The gentlemen all began calling to him, and I supposed they were heaping abuse upon his head; but when it was translated I was relieved to find that the most severe remark they had made was, "Go on, my beauty!" Away we flew, over *the sparkling* snow, to the islands; past empty houses,

making the echoes ring with our gay voices, and some times arousing a sleeping dog, whose startled bark brought forth such a series of howls from our equipage that he was forced to retire.

We were nearly three quarters of an hour in reaching our destination, — a place on one of the islands, called Samarcand. Leaving our troikas in the court-yard of a restaurant, we walked a short distance to some ice-hills, which were lighted with Chinese lanterns. A flight of steps about thirty feet high took us into a sort of pavilion. As I stood at the head of the steps, I beheld the glissade in front of me. It made my blood run cold to look at it. It was four or five feet broad, built of wood, covered with smooth ice, and sloping at an angle of forty-five degrees. After reaching the ground, it continued its course on a level for some distance, until another flight of steps was reached, leading to another pavilion, from which one could slide back to the starting-place. The two courses ran side by side, and were divided by a low wooden railing. Rows of Chinese lanterns illuminated the scene.

When I looked down that steep slope of ice, my heart failed me, and I meekly said I would wait there and rest, while the others went down. There was some laughter at my expense, and not the slightest attention was paid to my objections.

A sled with two seats was produced, and I was put behind Judith. Nicolas took the seat beside me, wrapped his arm tightly around me, and off we pitched! It was *such a frightful* moment when we started that I did

not even scream. I felt as if my last hour had come. I remember to have dreamed once that I was falling down a bottomless abyss; and certainly, I thought the dream was being realized in the few seconds it took us to descend that hill. Such a horrible feeling as came over me I hope never to experience again. Yet people do this for pleasure!

When we reached the end of the slide, I begged Nicolas, with tears in my eyes, to let me walk back to the place from which we had started; but he only laughed at me. I braced up my courage, and got on the sled again, saying, in a broken voice, that I knew I should die of fright, but I supposed Nicolas did not care. Down we went; and this time I got breath enough to scream, which was a great relief. I absolutely refused to be inveigled into trying it a second time.

I suppose there is a terrible fascination about it, like reading of murders. I had to eat twenty olives before I learned to like them, and it might be the same with the ice-hills: it is an acquired taste. We finally returned to the restaurant, where we took off our wraps, and had some hot tea, which served to revive my drooping spirits.

A discouraged-looking man took his seat at the piano, and played a few bars, then retired; and on a platform at one end of the room there appeared a group of six women and as many men, whose dark eyes and swarthy skins proclaimed their Bohemian origin. They took their seats in a semicircle; the leader — a hideous man, *with a guitar*—gave a signal, and they began to sing. It

was music which struck me with unutterable sadness, — like the voice of deep anguish, which bursts from homeless, hopeless wanderers. It opened with a wail, which grew gradually louder, the women interspersing their part with shrill cries. The song became more spirited as it went on, and the screams more frequent, till I imagined it to be the cry of souls in mortal agony, and shuddered instinctively as I listened. The leader swung his guitar about his head, placed one hand on his hip, and danced a few steps in a slow, mournful way. When the song ended, it was quite a shock to be brought back to every-day life by the bright, cheerful voice of Alice.

"What do you think of it?" she inquired.

"Don't ask me: it is too strange and weird. How dreamy they all look, as though they had insight into a region which is hidden from us!"

"It is a pity they affect French toilettes now, instead of clinging to their own costumes: they are quite picturesque in their national dress. Some of them," added my sister, "are very wealthy; but such is the love they have for a Bohemian life that they remain with the band."

"Look at this!" said Nicolas hastily.

The chorus had begun again; and, while the voices rose and fell in that unearthly wail, a woman stood up, waved her arms slowly round her head in a circling, sleepy movement, and glided about the stage, — being apparently impelled by some influence outside of herself, for there was no motion of the feet that we could see. She made the circuit two or three times; then the accompaniment grew wilder, the dancer uttered a sharp

cry, a "Ha-ha!" which grated on every nerve, and which she repeated at intervals through the remainder of the performance.

The circling movement stopped suddenly, and her arms fell stiffly by her sides. With her great, dark eyes fixed on some thought far, far away, she glided towards the front of the stage, quivering from head to foot. What strange spirit had taken possession of her, and moved her as the wind does a leaf? There was not a muscle in her body which did not move. Through the amber-colored silk dress which she wore could be traced every line and curve of her exquisite figure, as it trembled in this weird spasm. Gradually the chorus grew louder, the cries shriller, till the very height of pain or ecstasy was reached; and then the music ceased abruptly, the dancing-girl became a statue, and the Tsiganies sat looking straight before them, indifferent to everything in heaven and earth, with an unutterably sad stare in their dusky eyes.

"It gives me too much pain to see that!" I exclaimed. "It is unearthly. I cannot smile again this evening."

"You must try," said George; "for now we are going to dance, and we shall have no more of the gypsy music to-night."

The discouraged man resumed his seat at the piano, and struck up a waltz.

I thought that nothing more could astonish me in Mr. Thurber; but I must say I had a slight touch of surprise when he asked me to waltz with him, and I was

still more surprised to find that he danced admirably. He seems to do everything well which he attempts at all. Is he the sedate, unbending man I fancied him at first, or is he the gay, youthful fellow which he now and then seems, or is he a little of both, or is he neither? These are the questions which perplex me. Judith gives me no satisfaction; she says he does not know what he is himself. Tom is no judge; for he has developed a sort of blind idolatry for his new friend.

Mr. Thurber escorted me in to supper at one o'clock. George sat at one end of a long table; we took our places beside him, Judith opposite us, carrying on a brisk flirtation with Mr. Novissilsky. She hardly spoke to any one else.

There was a cup of steaming bouillon before each of us. Mr. Thurber tasted his, and looked at me as I was about to lift mine to my lips.

"I advise you not," he exclaimed.

"What is it?"

"I don't know. Something horrible."

"Do you know what it is?" I inquired of George, who had just swallowed his.

"*Batchuk*," said he briefly.

I knew as little about it as before, but I attacked it valiantly, and told Mr. Thurber I did not think it so bad after all.

"What is it made of, Count Piloff?" I asked.

"Beets, I believe. But see what you think of this dish."

It was some hot meat, which looked like venison.

"Ah!" ejaculated my English neighbor, "this is not equal to the bear I shot, Miss Dorris."

"Asparagus?" I cried, as another dish was passed to me. "At this season? In Russia?"

"Asparagus is never so good," quoth George, "as when it is out of season."

"You people," interrupted Tom, "talk of nothing but eating. I will tell you one thing," he continued, in a confidential tone, to any one who would listen to him, "this is the first dry champagne I have had in this country."

"I brought it with me," Mr. Thurber whispered in my ear. "You will notice that the Russians all prefer the sweet, except perhaps your neighbor."

To my surprise, however, George drank nothing except claret and water. He made a few efforts to open a conversation with Judith, but she did not respond as readily as usual, and he gave her up. Not a shade of annoyance appeared on his face; on the contrary he was particularly genial, and devoted himself to Mr. Thurber and me with apparent pleasure. We enjoyed ourselves thoroughly at that end of the table.

Coming home was the most delightful part of the excursion, however, although we were not so boisterous as on the way out. Madame Kirovieff and I rode backwards, giving the three gentlemen the other seat; for in that way we avoided having the wind in our faces. Poor Tom was put in the middle, and was nearly squeezed into nothing.

The horse on my side got his leg over the trace, and

made an effort to demolish the back of my head, which I took out of his way as speedily as possible. Tom and Sacha were out of the sleigh in an instant, and at the horse's head; but Mr. Thurber sat calmly in his place and gave directions to the others.

"Don't jump!" he cried, seizing my hands.

"I have no more idea of it than you have," I responded calmly. "Don't you think you would be more useful if you held the horse instead of my hands?"

"Not the slightest need of it"; and nothing would induce him to get out.

We were soon flying through the air again, with nothing but the bells and the gay voices to break the stillness, snow-fields stretching away on either side, and the stars shining brightly above us. When we reached the Neva, and the long row of lights on the border of the river became visible, Tom said, in a disgusted tone, —

"Is this all that is going to happen to us?"

"What more do you wish?" asked the Russian lady, who by the way is very beautiful.

"I supposed we should have a runaway, at least. I had no idea a troika ride was such an ordinary affair."

But we had no accident. The streets were still and empty, and a distant clock struck five when we drew up at our own door. Rousing the sleepy Suisse, we got into the house, and, finding the samovar hot, we indulged in some tea, and then went to bed.

CHAPTER XI.

AN IMPERIAL WEDDING.

January 25.

CERTAINLY I had to come to Russia to be appreciated. I have been gradually discovering this for some time, but a realizing sense of it burst upon me yesterday, at the marriage of "Her Imperial Highness the Grand Duchess Anastasia Michaelovna" to "His Royal Highness, My Lord, the Hereditary Grand Duke Frederic of Mechlenburg-Schwerin," — all in very large capitals. How small "Mr." and "Mrs." sound after that!

The wedding took place in the palace chapel, the scene of the christening. There are only three or four days in the week when members of the Greek Church may marry, and of these Friday and Sunday seem to be the favorites.

I am beginning to feel quite at home in the palace, but have not yet reached the point of wishing to be maid of honor. Such gilded servitude would not suit me. Give me rather a floor to scrub and a good brush to do it with, and let me keep my independence.

Among the gentlemen of the palace who met us in the first hall which we entered was Mr. Cheremenieff.

He joined me at once, telling me naïvely that he had been waiting for me, and asking me why I did not go to the ballet the night before, when I suddenly remembered that I had told him I intended to go.

"Were you there?" I asked.

"Yes," he answered hesitatingly; then added, with a badly assumed air of indifference, "I go nearly every Thursday."

There was a few moments' silence, as we followed the rest of the party through the lofty rooms; then I said abruptly, —

"What are you?"

My companion evidently thought I had become suddenly insane, and his mystified air amused me vastly.

"I mean, what is your position? What are your duties in the palace?"

"Oh!" (laughing with an air of intense relief) "I am *gentilhomme de la chambre.* On certain days I am on duty here to make myself useful in this way."

"Escorting ladies about? Not an unpleasant duty, I should say."

"Quite the contrary," responded my gallant companion. After a pause he continued, —

"Do you intend to stay long in Russia, mademoiselle?"

"About two months longer."

His face fell. "Is that all?"

"Quite long enough to stay away from one's own country."

"But you *would like* Russia; I am sure you would.

I — that is — we — all of us would make you so fond of it that you would not wish to go away," stammering, and growing a little confused.

"I dare say you would," I answered. "That is the reason I don't care to stay longer; for think what a terrible catastrophe it would be if I grew to like Russia so much that I did not wish to leave it."

"Then we might be able to induce you to stay always," said the young man, looking as if he would say more if he dared. He had said all I wished, and I was glad that we reached the throne-room just at this moment, and he was obliged to leave me.

The members of the diplomatic corps dropped in and chatted together, the ladies criticising each other's dresses.

We went into the chapel at last, and spread out our trains for the first, last, and only time that morning, to be ready for the entrance of the wedding party.

First came a long procession of all the gentlemen of the chamber, two by two, then the chamberlains, the masters of ceremonies, and the grand master of ceremonies, preceding the Emperor, who led the mother of the bridegroom.

She wore a cream-colored satin petticoat, and a red velvet train covered with gold embroidery; her jewels were rubies and diamonds. The Tsarevna came in with her husband, followed by her eldest sons.

The bride and groom were the last to enter the chapel. She is tall and slender, with dark eyes and smooth, dark *hair. She* was dressed in cloth of silver, and her train

was crimson velvet, lined with ermine. She wore a tiara of rubies and diamonds, an old point-lace veil, two strings of enormous diamonds on her neck, and such a lustrous diamond stomacher that I could hardly look at her, for the flash and glitter of the jewels. Her train — very heavy and several yards long — was borne on the shoulders of four chamberlains, and a still greater personage walked behind her and carried the tail end of it. The bridegroom is pale and looks delicate.

I could cover pages with descriptions of cloth-of-gold and silver and velvet dresses, and gorgeous jewels, but I never could do justice to the scene. After the bridal party had taken their places at the altar, the ladies of the court entered, and the chapel soon became uncomfortably warm.

Mr. Cheremenieff was stationed at the other end of the room, but as his head towered above all the others I was disagreeably conscious that his eyes were fixed on me most of the time.

"How restless you are!" whispered Judith; "and oh, look at your young friend! How he gazes at you!"

"Don't notice him," I said nervously.

"I wonder where George is," she continued, craning her neck, and looking about in a very irreverent manner.

Alice overheard her, and put her mind at rest by saying, "Here he is, behind me."

Meanwhile there was a great deal of chanting and moving about, none of which I understood. The room grew warmer and closer, and Mr. Cheremenieff's eyes

made me more and more nervous, until, for the first time in my life, I began to feel faint. I struggled bravely against it, but the priests' voices, the hum of the congregation, and the rustling of dresses became confused and dim, and I felt that in another moment I should be forced to sit down on the floor if I would not fall. Then I was vaguely conscious that a hand was laid on my arm, and a voice said, —

"Give me your fan, and lean this way if you are going to faint."

I complied mechanically, and in a few seconds conquered my weakness enough to loose my frantic clasp of George's arm, and to refuse the various smelling-bottles which were offered to me.

"I never faint," was my grateful reply to Count Piloff for his kindness.

"You looked wonderfully like it then," he murmured, smiling at my indignation.

"Pray tell me what they are doing," said I, indicating the bride and groom.

"They are about to drink of the same cup, — symbol of the joys and sorrows they must share through life. Those lighted candles they will each hold through the remainder of the service. And now look at this."

Two large golden crowns, set with jewels, were brought forth. They were held over the heads of the bridal couple by the different groomsmen in turn, while more chanting went on.

"Tremendously difficult performance that," remarked George.

The crowns seemed to be very heavy, and had to be held up at arm's length. Rings were exchanged; then the metropolitan joined the hands of the couple under a cloth-of-gold scarf, and led them three times slowly round the altar, still holding the candles, and being crowned by the groomsmen. This tour must have been rather troublesome for the bride, with her five train-bearers, her crown-holder, her candle in one hand, and her other hand in her husband's.

"Now they are married," said my neighbor. "They cannot change their minds after this."

I sighed.

"Do you feel ill again?" quickly.

"No. I was only thinking what a dreadful thing it must be to feel that you cannot change your mind."

The choir burst into a joyful song, and we were politely requested to walk out, which we did with much clatter and noise. The outer halls through which we passed were filled with officers of the guard, in full uniform, who made way for us to go into the hall of St. Alexander, where the Lutheran service was to be held. George kept close to my side, and suggested that I should go home at once; but I only laughed at him.

"I never fainted in my life," I cried. "It was nothing but the heat, and the fact that I have had no breakfast."

He stopped short and looked at me. "Are you wild?"

"No; but I slept so late that I had only time to take a cup of coffee."

"Then you certainly ought to go home," he exclaimed. "You have been on your feet for an hour and a half, and this service will be an hour long. I can take you to the carriage."

"No, no!" I cried. "It is nonsense. I don't wish to go!"

George drew his brows together, but only said, "If you insist upon it, of course you must stay; but I assure you there is nothing more worth seeing."

There was no time for further discussion, as we entered the hall at that moment. A platform and desk were prepared, as they are in a Lutheran Church, and three priests were waiting in their black gowns. The wedding procession soon entered, and the second service was performed in German. Its simplicity was the greatest possible contrast to the elaborate ceremony which had preceded it. There was a long sermon, consisting of good advice for the young people; then the bride and groom kissed all the family, and walked out. We followed, reaching home between three and four o'clock.

"Well, Tom," said my cousin, as we entered the house, "Dorris made herself famous by nearly fainting in George's arms, while Cheremenieff gazed at them from a distance in jealous despair."

"Did she really?" cried Tom eagerly.

"Certainly," insisted Judith. "Cheremenieff is very far gone, if I am any judge."

In vain I remonstrated. I was made to lie down, while Judith bathed my head and petted me to her heart's content.

The festivities at the palace were going on all this time. There was a great dinner, attended by the high court officials, the ministers of the empire, and the ladies belonging to the court. Toasts were drunk, while the guns of the fortress fired an accompaniment, and a concert was given in the dining-hall by the best musicians in Petersburg.

The ball — if it can be called a ball when the imperial family did all the dancing — was held in St. George's Hall, at half-past eight.

We passed through long corridors filled with richly dressed gentlemen, and through an immense room, full of windows, columns, and officers. There was a narrow way in the centre, down which we went, seeing various familiar faces among the surrounding uniforms, and, traversing another corridor, came to the door of the ball-room. The number of invitations was limited, including only a few of those who were present at the wedding. No officer under the rank of a colonel was allowed in the ball-room.

Opposite the door by which we entered was the throne, and over our heads was the orchestra. The throne was covered with red brocade, with a canopy over it of the same. The ceiling of the room was arched and painted.

The dresses were the same which had been worn in the morning; only those who were fortunate enough to possess more than one court-train had changed, and among this number were all of the grand duchesses.

The chamberlains and gentlemen of the chamber

wore white silk stockings and white knee-breeches, dark coats heavily trimmed with gold lace, and they carried black cocked hats trimmed with gold lace and feathers. The masters of ceremonies had long gilt wands; with which they preceded the imperial family when it entered at nine o'clock. The band played the polonaise from "La vie pour le Tsar," and the procession took its way to the foot of the throne, stayed there a few minutes, then began to dance the polonaise. It can hardly be called a dance, as it simply consists in walking rather quickly in procession about the room, two by two, the gentleman just touching the lady's fingers as he leads her out. The grand master of ceremonies led the way, followed by two lesser lights. Prince L—— led the polonaise, with a very martial air. He plunged into the crowd in the most unexpected places, scattering the people right and left, crushing us up together; and by the time we had come to a realizing sense that the Emperor was passing close to us, and had made our courtesies with much confusion, and many bumps from our neighbors, — lo! there was the procession behind us, and we were obliged to face about and go through with the same ceremony again.

George was talking to Judith most of the evening. He had no eyes for any one else, though he did say to me at first, "I am glad to see you looking so well this evening."

Mr. Cheremenieff, however, attached himself to my side, and remained there from the time I entered the *room till I drove* away from the palace door. I amused

myself by criticising everything, and horrified my companion by proposing to dance the polonaise.

"Why not?" I cried. "There goes the German ambassadress."

"I really think you had better not," remonstrated Mr. Cheremenieff. "People might think it strange."

"But why are you so afraid of what people will say? In America we do exactly as we like. If the President were dancing a polonaise, I should not hesitate to step in behind him if I wished it," cried I, devoutly hoping that Alice might not hear the tales with which I was entertaining this young man, well knowing she would immediately tell him that I was talking nonsense.

"Indeed!" he responded. "It must be a — a — charming country. I hope to visit it some time. O mademoiselle" (suddenly becoming sentimental) "if you would only try to like Russia! Believe me, the greatest joy — "

Here the polonaise interrupted my companion's speech. After the necessary salutations had been gone through with, a charming young Frenchman who stood near me raised his dark eyes plaintively to mine, and murmured, —

"Mademoiselle, je vous en supplie! J'ai reçu tous vos contre-coups!"

The next moment Mr. Cheremenieff resumed his place by my side.

"Sometime," he said in a low tone, "I shall visit America. I am now studying English, and making great progress. *Would you*" (putting on a beseeching look) "*would you welcome* me if I came to your country?"

"We are probably the most hospitable nation in th world," I responded sagely. "But you are very youn you will have plenty of time to travel in the future."

He did not look pleased at this.

"If you would make up your mind to stay in Russ for a few years, I assure you we could make you happy (with an air of stern determination).

"No doubt," I answered carelessly. "How pretty th bride looks! That is a cloth-of-silver train, is n't i The Tsarevna has such a sweet face, I think: she lool sympathetic. Is that the Grand Duke Michael? should know he was a great general, or a great man some sort."

My companion reluctantly followed my lead in co versation.

"I am sure you must admire the wife of the Gran Duke Vladimir," he remarked. "She is the only or who has married into the imperial family and retaine her own religion."

Pages followed the ladies to arrange their trains, a they turned the corners.

We suspended conversation for a few minutes, to watc the dancing; then my young friend began again: "I your country, I hear, it is customary for a gentl man, when he wishes to marry a young lady, to decla his feelings directly to her, before speaking to her paren or guardians."

I hesitated. "Yes, but the lady always gives hi some decided encouragement before he says anything t *her.*"

I felt that I must proceed warily; for I knew not what results might follow.

"Ah!" he exclaimed eagerly; "but what would you call encouragement?"

"Well," I debated for a moment, "asking the man to call and see her — or — accepting a present from him, or — telling him she is *fond of his mother*."

I paused; and my companion looked at me in dumb amazement. He must think the Americans a very curious and wonderful people!

"Any of those things," I went on seriously, "would be considered encouragement."

He ceased to look astonished, and began to be downcast.

"And without something of that sort, a man would not declare his feelings?"

"Oh, dear, no!" I cried. "What lovely blue eyes Madame Kirovieff has!"

"I prefer dark ones," said my companion, looking at me sentimentally.

The ambassador approached at this moment, and I had a short respite. At ten o'clock the imperial family left the hall.

"Come," said Nicolas.

"Where?" Judith and I inquired, in a breath.

"Home, of course. Have you not been here long enough?"

"You don't mean to tell me," said I indignantly, "that this is all! I thought it was a ball. The idea of going home *at this hour*, — having done nothing but watch *other people* dance!"

They all laughed; and we lingered for a long time, being among the last to leave the hall. We stared in our most well-bred manner at Chung How, the Chinese ambassador, and some of his suite. He is a mandarin of the highest rank, "Wearer of the Diamond Button," etc., etc., etc. He was dressed in a yellow satin gown over a blue one, and had a large emerald ring on his thumb.

At last we had to depart. While my overshoes were being put on for me by one servant, and my cloak thrown about me by another (I never wait on myself in Russia), Mr. Cheremenieff asked me if I intended to go to a rout at one of the embassies the next evening.

"Rout?" I repeated, opening my eyes very wide, and nearly losing my equilibrium, as Vasili worked on my overshoe. "Do ladies go?"

George laughed. "I can imagine the visions of Bohemians, dancing-girls, and wild orgies which are flying through your head at that word. You will be disappointed when you learn that a rout is only a mild reception, with no dancing, and very little to eat."

"Then I shall not go, Mr. Cheremenieff" (twisting my bashlik about my head, and mechanically allowing George to tie it behind for me). "I don't think I am invited; and I don't care for any more parties till I have had one day's rest. Good-night."

I came home quite pleased with myself for having discovered that Mr. Cheremenieff was in love with me, and for having made him understand in such a delicate way *that I could* not return his affection. It seems to me

that I must be very attractive; for here is Mr. Thurber in love with me too, — as much in love as an icicle ever is. I wonder that no one at home discovered my fascinations.

Joking aside, I am growing tired of the utterly artificial life which I lead here, and would like to get back among my own people. If I had not been so interested in my own affairs lately, I should have been anxious about Judith. She looks sad and heavy-eyed: it may be the late hours which we keep, and the continual excitement in which we live. I hope that is all.

I left my room this morning to go to the library, where I always find the newspapers. On my way thither I passed through the little *salon*, where Judith likes to sit by the fire. I was absorbed in my own thoughts, and did not notice that the room was occupied till I was in the middle of the floor. There was George, talking earnestly to my cousin, and she was — crying! I walked on to the other door, after one astonished glance, paying little attention to George's polite bow. But I tried unsuccessfully to interest myself in the paper when I reached the library. What can it mean? I suppose time alone will solve the mystery; but I am puzzled.

CHAPTER XII.

A COURT BALL, AND THE MYSTERY SOLVED.

January, 1879.

WHATEVER I may think of George, I certainly cannot say that he is unforgiving. He treats me just as he has always done, in spite of the disagreeable scenes at which he has been present, and the rude speeches I have made to him. This goes to prove the truth of what I said about him, namely, that he cares too little about people and things in general to be unforgiving. He looks upon us all (except, perhaps, Judith) as toys with which to amuse his idle hours, and he would not hurt us any more than he would hurt his horse or his dog; in fact, his feeling for us is much the same as that which he has for his brown setter. I cannot think him capable of a deep love for any one. It is true that his eyes — which are generally the coldest I have ever seen — warm up wonderfully sometimes, and his smile is all the sweeter for being so rare; and it may be that I am prejudiced against him, as Mr. Thurber suggested. The idea of Judith's caring for him makes me very unhappy.

Sacha has nearly fallen out of my good graces, he is *so foolish*. Instead of going to work like a man, and

honestly trying to win Judith, he stands back with the air of a martyr, and glowers at all rivals in the field. George is undoubtedly the most dangerous of these. I sneered when Sacha pronounced him fascinating, but I see now what he meant. George *is* fascinating. Notwithstanding my conviction of his insincerity, I find that in his presence I forget it, and am conscious of the attraction which seems to draw all women towards him. There is in him a peculiar quality of tenderness, which makes me feel that if I were ill, or suffering in any way, I could go to him for sympathy. This may be his true character, which occasionally pierces through the outside polish. I hope, for Judith's sake, that it is so. I never had so many contradictory opinions about a man before.

Judith came to my room last night, when I was making preparations to arrange my hair for the palace ball. This is an important operation with me; it consists in the transportation of an immense lamp from the parlor to my room, and the construction of a pile of books on my dressing-table, on which the lamp is posed at the proper height to illumine my head. After all my efforts, I generally trust very much to luck for my back hair.

Judith made her appearance in a hideous pink wrapper, with her blond hair all twisted up into one tight knot, as if she had just stepped out of her bath.

"Dorris," she cried abruptly, putting down her candle, and closing unceremoniously the little pane in my window *which I had* opened to air the room, "Dorris,

there are two hours before we need to start. I want you to tell me something."

There was a strange excitement in her tone, and her eyes were unusually large and bright. I looked at her in silence. My cousin laughed softly.

"Don't look so alarmed," taking my lamp from me, and setting it down ruthlessly on a bunch of artificial sunflowers which I had spent one hour in arranging.

"There! You have ruined them!" I exclaimed, indignantly rescuing my flowers. "And I have no others to wear."

She took them gently away from me.

"I am so sorry, dear. But see,—I will make them all right. Don't be cross with me!"

"You are so impulsive!" I sighed. "If you had only stopped to look, you would have seen the flowers."

"Of course I should; but I did not look. They are as good as new now; so don't fix your black eyes on me any longer with that reproachful look."

She put a hand on each of my shoulders, and looked down on me fondly from her superior height.

"Listen. Suppose, if you can—suppose you were in love!"

"Well?" I said, after a brief pause, during which she never removed her eyes from mine. "I am willing to suppose it. What then?"

"What then?" she repeated in rather a puzzled tone, turning away and seating herself on an ottoman. "Well, what then? Sure enough," looking at me again, and *laughing.*

"Is that what you came to ask me?" I inquired calmly, arranging my lamp to suit me.

"Don't be sarcastic, Dorris. It does not become you."

A short silence, during which I sat down in front of my mirror and began to braid my hair.

"Some one is in love with me, Dorris," she said quietly, leaning her round cheek on her palm. "Did you know it?"

A broad smile made its appearance on my face as I gazed at its reflection. Before I could reply Judith went on: —

"I do not mean George, so you need not look as if you were saying, 'I told you so!' But it is some one who is very rich, quite handsome, highly connected, everything that is desirable, and exactly what you would like for a cousin."

Her eyes were studying the pattern in the rug at her feet; her mouth looked mischievous.

"Well?" I interrogated, without enthusiasm.

"There is a sameness in your expressions to-night, Dorris," she said, looking at me slyly. "I suppose you mean to ask what I am going to do about it?"

"Yes, if you wish to tell me."

"I have already refused him."

"You are a sensible woman," I cried emphatically, turning towards her. "Don't let anything tempt you to marry a man whom you do not care for."

Judith rose slowly from her seat, took her candle, and stood before me, pondering. Little rings of hair curled

lovingly about her soft, round throat; her lashes, long and black, rested on her cheeks.

"Do you know why I refused him?" she asked, almost in a whisper.

"Only because you did not love him," I responded, with a vague fear in my heart.

She came behind me, kissed the top of my head gently, and whispered, —

"Because I love some one else."

My heart gave one wild leap, and then sank. It was true then, — my worst fears were realized. Judith stood there, waiting for me to speak. I hesitated one instant, then took possession of the white hand which she had laid timidly on my shoulder, and put it to my lips as I replied, —

"That is right, Judith. Be true to him if he is worthy of you."

She burst into a passion of tears, but soon recovered herself; and, with as few words as possible, I sent her away to dress. Then I sat and looked at my small image in the glass.

"Dorris Romilly," I soliloquized, "don't make yourself disagreeable. Help the dear child to be as happy as possible; be unselfish. You dislike George without any reason: try to like him. Because your romance had but a short existence, and ended in sorrow which nearly broke your heart, do not begrudge others their happiness. Conquer yourself, Dorris, conquer yourself!"

Still the image looked back at me with sad eyes.

The clock on my mantel struck eight. I began to dress hurriedly, continuing to reason with myself as I did so; and I moved as though in a dream, out of which I was suddenly awakened by Nicolas's voice, who told me the whole party was waiting for me.

The palace was blazing with light as we drove up to it. There were three thousand guests; and I felt like a small atom in that brilliant throng. While I was looking about me, rather bewildered by it all, my eyes fell on Sacha, who was in a splendid uniform. He looked quite handsome. His face brightened, and he came towards me, nearly upsetting my friend the ambassador, who was also making his way in my direction. The latter frowned, and turned away. Sacha gained my side, breathless but triumphant.

"Will you walk a little?"

"Willingly; but" (turning to Alice) "where will you be when I want to find you?"

"Somewhere near here," she answered; and I started off on a tour of inspection.

We finally reached a part of the great ball-room which was comparatively clear. There were two or three chairs standing against the wall. Having been for some time on my feet, I was glad to drop into one of these. Sacha started back, as if he were shocked, — "O mademoiselle!"

"What is it?" I exclaimed.

"Oh, indeed, I would not do that!"

"Do what? Sit down?" I answered. "Why not?"

"It is *not the custom*, really."

I arose, with a sigh.

"What nonsense all these rules are! No one would have noticed me."

I still felt half-dazed, after my interview with Judith. I wished to think about it; but that was an impossibility, with all this bustle and noise around me. I resolved to shake off the spell which Judith's words had cast over me, and enjoy myself as much as I could. Sacha began to talk earnestly to me, on the same old subject.

"I am engaged to her for the third quadrille," I heard him saying, "and I shall take that opportunity."

Poor fellow! He never could get his courage up to propose to Judith; but he was always threatening it. I began to talk with him about George. Perhaps he would tell me that secret now, I thought; but it would be too late to save my darling girl, for she loved him. Somehow, my heart was very heavy.

"You once began," I said, "to tell me something about Count Piloff; but you did not finish it."

He looked at me vacantly; then a gleam of recollection lighted up his dark eyes.

"Yes, I remember," he answered. "I don't know whether I had better tell you or not."

"You are the best judge of that," I made answer indifferently. "Of course, if you tell me, it will go no further."

After a moment of apparent hesitation, Sacha said, in a low and confidential tone: —

"*Mademoiselle*, it is something startling I am about

to confide to you; but you must consider that George has knocked about the world a great deal, and perhaps has not that fine sense of honor which he would have had under different circumstances. I should not mention the matter, were it not for your cousin's interest to know the truth about him."

"Never mind apologizing," I cried impatiently.

"George has made a heavy bet at the club that he will marry an heiress within six months. He made that bet the day after he met your cousin, and directly after some men had been asking him about her; so it was understood by all that she was the heiress indicated."

The music and the noise around me seemed to be compressed into one loud "Bang!" which knocked my heart and my brain together. I turned on my companion, with an angry cry: "Is this true?" I exclaimed.

"True!" he repeated. "How could I tell it to you otherwise?"

The sharp pain in my heart dulled my other senses. I knew that Sacha's voice was going on and on, but had not an idea of what he was saying. I knew, too, that some acquaintances came and spoke to me; that Sacha left me, that the ambassador escorted me into the next room and gave me an ice, and that I ate it mechanically; but all the time I was saying mentally, "Infamous! Oh, poor Judith!"

Then a relief, sudden as the blow had been, came over me. Perhaps it was all a lie. George was not capable of such a thing. In any case, why should I care? I had never *liked him.* But the dull pain settled down at

my heart again, and stayed there. My companion asked me if I felt ill. No, I said; but I was tired. So I was, very tired.

The ambassador took me in to supper. There were three supper-rooms. In the largest the imperial table was spread; also two others, at one of which we took our places. And there were two bands, which played alternately during supper. The music was sad, and I could hardly swallow a mouthful. We ate off massive gold and silver; the wine stood in coolers of beautiful silver filagree; the glass was exquisite Bohemian. The Emperor did not sup, but walked about, and talked with many of his guests. Three thousand people, seated, without crowding, at a hot supper served on Sèvres and silver dishes, was a truly imperial entertainment. But I was not in a fit state of mind to appreciate this magnificence.

I had seen none of my party since the first of the evening, and after supper I made a thorough search of the ball-room, but without success. At last the ambassador proposed to leave me in a certain spot and go by himself to look for Alice. He had not been gone long when a servant offered me some hot punch. As I was drinking it, George's voice close beside me said, —

"At last, Miss Romilly, I have found you! I have been looking everywhere for you."

Something, I know not what, perhaps a tone of heartiness or sincerity in his voice, sent a pang of regret and incredulity through me. I felt the tears rush in a blinding mist to my eyes as I lifted them to his without

a word. I conquered myself the moment I encountered his calm gaze, and colored guiltily, fearing I had betrayed my knowledge of his secret. He did not speak a word as he took the empty glass from my hand and put it on a table near by. Then he sat down quietly beside me, saying, "We are to wait here for Alice. She is saying good-night to some half dozen friends."

"And Judith?" I inquired.

"Is with her. Where have you kept yourself all the evening? None of us have seen you since you deserted us to go off with Novissilsky."

"I don't know where I have been, nor who I have seen, nor what I have done," I answered wearily. "It has all been a tremendous noise and confusion. Jewels, footmen in livery; and every one whom I ever knew talking to me at once."

"Tiresome, is it not? I fancy you are glad to have a chance to sit down."

"Yes. Mr. Novissilsky would not allow me to sit when I was with him."

He laughed, and it seemed to me there was a touch of contempt in his amusement.

"Sacha is punctilious," he remarked quietly.

"Is he truthful?" I cried abruptly, turning an anxious face on my companion.

He did not immediately return my look, but he answered carelessly, —

"I have no reason to think otherwise. Have you?"

"Perhaps *not*," I said musingly. "Perhaps not,"

more decidedly. "I would like to think him untruthful though."

"Pray do then," laughed George. "It is generally safe to doubt people; and if he has told you anything unpleasant, don't believe him. At least," he said, suddenly becoming grave, leaning forward, and looking me in the face, "do not let his words, whatever they were, make you so sad. He has ruined your evening for you, I see. Believe me, nothing that he can tell you is worth a moment's unhappiness, unless it is something which concerns you personally, which is not likely. In any case," gazing at me with a gleam of warmer interest than usual in his eyes, "do not let anything he says make you look so wretched as you did when I came up to you just now. I —" Before he could finish his sentence, or I could reply, Alice came in, with the others of our party, and we wended our way towards the door.

George's few words put new courage into me, for some reason, and I felt quite cheerful when we reached home, so that I proposed to Judith to awaken Tom and Grace, and give them an account of our adventures. We had some difficulty in arousing them, but at last succeeded in getting Grace up. She enveloped herself in a wrapper, and came out into her dressing-room to listen to our narrative.

"Well, Grace," I said, tilting myself on the arm of a chair, "you never saw anything so magnificent in your life. We walked through a mile or two of corridors *and halls,* brilliantly lighted with candles —"

"Tallow-dips or spermaceti?" called Tom from behind the screen, in a loud voice.

"High-arched ceilings over our heads," I continued, regardless of this interruption. "Finally we came to the Salle des Négres,— so called because at the doors which lead from there to the apartments of the Emperor, two Arabians, dressed in white, are stationed as guards. Next came an octagonal room, lined with tables holding tea, cakes, and ices. So on, through more magnificent halls —"

"Did you count all this in your two or three miles?" asked Tom meekly; but I vouchsafed no reply.

"The floors were polished until they were like ice. At last we came to a perfect dream of splendor. It was a long corridor, ornamented with plants, and containing a table which ran the entire length of it, holding tea, cakes, and other refreshment. The green plants, the white table-cloth, the glittering glass and silver, the lights overhead, all grew smaller, and smaller, and smaller, and smaller, until they dwindled into nothing, simply because the eye could reach no farther."

"Oh, come now!" as I stopped for comment.

"True, Tom," spoke up Judith.

"This corridor," I continued, "was separated from the ball-room by a row of Corinthian columns, which were wound with evergreens interspersed with lighted candles. The room was immensely high, a balcony with carved balustrade surrounded it, and the walls were lined with immense palms and magnolias. Servants in red, yellow, *and white* livery stood behind the tables to

serve us. Maids of honor and Russian ladies were arranged in a line extending from the door where the imperial family was to enter; opposite them were the ladies of the diplomatic corps. Opposite the door, upon which all eyes were fixed, were Russian gentlemen, all in court or military uniform. The door opened, the murmur of voices ceased, a master of ceremonies entered, and soon after the Emperor and his family. He bowed, and the answering courtesies made the room look like a field of wheat in a wind."

"Old, but appropriate. Go on."

"The Emperor talked a little with some members of the diplomatic body, and then opened the ball with a polonaise. I need not describe that to you."

"Judith," said Grace suddenly, "I hope you did not tear your dress."

"Mine is nearly demolished," I said sadly, "but Judith's is as good as new. She must have kept very quiet somewhere to get it torn so little. Come, Judith! They don't appreciate our description. Let us go to bed and leave them."

When we reached the door, Tom called out in a wide-awake tone, "Hold on!" But we refused to listen. I was sound asleep a few minutes after my head touched the pillow.

Evening.

I have just had a long talk with Judith. After what she has told me, I am sure nothing could astonish me; *the heavens* might fall, and I should think that all was *as it should* be.

We went to walk together, taking Mathilde to guard us. As usual on the Nevsky, we met Circassians, Georgians, Turks, Persians, and Cossacks, — every nationality under the sun. Some of the church-bells were ringing, and at the sound the istvostchiks took off their hats and crossed themselves devoutly. We had not gone many yards before Judith turned to me with a laugh, saying, —

"Did you think I was a little insane last night, my dear?"

"Not exactly," I answered. "I have seen the matter coming to this point for some time."

"Have you?" (opening her eyes in surprise). "I did not suppose you had the remotest idea of it."

"Why, Judith, you know I thought long ago that he cared for you!"

She looked puzzled, and then amused.

"O Dorris," she said, "I really believe there has been a misunderstanding. You surely did not think — did you think I meant George?" turning a laughing face eagerly upon me.

"Of course," I responded, with a catch in my breath. "Who else could it be?"

"It is not George," Judith said, walking on quietly. "It is some one whom you have never seen —"

"Ah!" I interrupted, stopping in the middle of the street at the risk of being run over, and staring at my cousin. "It is —"

She took me by the arm and pulled me across the street. "How reckless you are!"

"But," I persisted, "it must be the young man Vienna, — the one whom Mr. Tremaine wrote me abc — Roger Fisk. Is it he, Judith?" with an appeal look.

"What did Mr. Tremaine write you about him?" asked eagerly.

"But is it he?"

"What did my guardian say about him?" she repea with emphasis.

"I will not go another step," I exclaimed, stopping front of the Kazan Church, "until you tell me whet it was Roger Fisk that you were talking about."

She laughed in spite of herself. "Yes, it was."

"Who would have dreamed it?" I murmured, c tinuing my way. "Who would have thought you w in love?"

"Come, Dorris, you are very provoking!" said cousin, looking as if she thought of pouting. "V don't you tell me about Mr. Tremaine's letter?"

"He only said that Mr. Fisk had written to him, that he would consent to no engagement until were of age."

"I shall be twenty-one in August," she cried tri phantly. "What else did he say?"

"Only that he wondered how you had succeeded making your mutual confessions when you were i strict boarding-school."

She laughed immoderately.

"Dorris, I have known Roger for four years."

I gazed at her blankly.

"But you have only been in Europe four years!"

"Very true. I met Roger the week after I arrived in Paris, at the house of a lady who was extremely kind to me. I believe you know her. It was Mrs. Emmons. I used to dine with her often, and he was generally there, and we had plenty of other mutual friends in the American colony. Roger was studying in the hospitals. He went to Vienna ten months after I entered the school there, and in that city we could not have met often, except that I used to go to riding-school with one of the teachers, who was absorbed in the study of Italian. She had a chance to go to Italy with a family in the vacation, and as they supposed her to be proficient in the language, it behooved her to study diligently. She used to take her books with her, and she never noticed me from the time we got there till we left. Roger always met me, and in that way we saw each other regularly twice a week. It was great fun!" Judith looked at me with a broad smile.

"I should think so," I responded. "What an excellent plan it is to send girls abroad to school!"

"I knew Mr. Tremaine would never consent," she went on, after a while. "I told Roger it was of no use to write; but he said there should be no deceit about the affair, if he could prevent it, and —"

"Yes," I interrupted, "it seems to have been a very open and straightforward performance, — especially the meetings at the riding-school."

"Now, Dorris," she said coaxingly, "don't be unkind about it!"

"My dear child," I replied briskly, "I am more pleased with you than I can say. I did not know that you were capable of such constancy, and I cannot praise you too highly."

"That 's a dear! If we were not in the street, I would kiss you. So you do not think it is such a foolish affair, after all?"

"I did not say that. Worldly people would tell you that you were wild. But I don't see anything so strange in your looking forward to an engagement at some future date."

She looked a little crestfallen.

"I am engaged to him now," she murmured.

"Well, I don't think you can expect me to approve of that!"

"I shall be twenty-one in the summer; Roger is coming home in the fall, and will begin to practise at once. Surely, that is not such a dismal prospect."

"Mr. Tremaine would call it so."

"I don't care at all what he calls it," she responded pettishly. "I love Roger, and no one else; and I never will marry any one but him!"

"Bravo!" I cried. "I admire your resolution." Then, as the thought of sundry flirtations which had been going on lately in Petersburg travelled through my mind, I added, in a cooler tone, "If you only live up to your idea, and don't change your mind."

"Roger is not afraid to trust me. He was afraid when I left Paris: he did not expect me to be true to him; and *the first time* he met me, after that ten months' separa-

tion, he was very doubtful about the reception I should give him. But when he found that such a long absence had made no difference, he decided that he could trust me forever. You see he thinks I am a coquette by nature, and mean no harm," she added earnestly.

"Strange that he should" (ironically). "But do you mean to tell me that you were engaged to him before you left Paris?" I demanded in blank dismay.

"Yes," answered my cousin meekly.

"Judith, come home!" (turning and beginning to retrace my steps). "I did not suppose you had such depths of deceit in you."

"Don't be vexed!" she panted, struggling to keep up with my hasty steps.

"I am not. I am only utterly amazed."

When we turned in at our own door, and began the ascent to our apartment, a thought of George flashed across me. I sat down on the stairs.

"What are you doing?" exclaimed my companion, her eyes dancing with amusement.

"Unhappy girl!" I cried, in a voice which I tried to make severe. "How about George, and all the others?"

"The others can take care of themselves. As for George, he knows the whole story. Take care, Dorris! You will lose your eyes! Yes, I told George about it long ago; for when he was in Vienna, he and Roger were great friends, and you cannot imagine how I have enjoyed talking with him about Roger. He gives me ever so much encouragement. But come! Are you going to sit there *all day?*"

I rose slowly, and continued the ascent.

"Then George is not in love with you, after all?"

"In love with me?" (emphatically). "Far from it! He never has been, and never will be."

"All his attention to you, which I took for pure devotion, was sympathy? The reason you and he were so fond of talking together was because you talked of Roger?"

"Yes; and when I was blue, he used to comfort me, and tell me that things would come out right in the end. He advised me many times to confide in you; but I never could get courage enough."

"Well," said I, as we entered the library-door together, "if anything remains of me after the successive shocks you have given me, it will be almost a miracle. How fortunate that the servants understand no English! Judith, you are a good girl" (giving her rather an awkward embrace, for I am not of a caressing disposition). "I cannot talk any more about it now; for I must write it down in my journal."

CHAPTER XIII.

MORE REVELATIONS.

Saturday, January —.

TOM cheerfully remarked, apropos of Prince Tucheff and his disappointment about Judith, that men always get over these things. I dare say Mr. Thurber is no exception to this rule. He came here this morning, told me frankly that he loved me, and asked me if I could return his affection. I knew that it was right to confess the truth to him, so I said that I was very fond of him as a friend, but I did not love him. I offered him my friendship, which seems to be the proper thing to do under such circumstances, but which is very much like giving a child crackers when it cries for plum pudding.

He took my answer quietly, left me abruptly, and I was alone nearly all day, being kept in the house by a cold. At twilight, as I was standing by the double window, watching the row of lights in the Gastinni Dvor, and the half-frozen istvostchiks slapping their hands together and stamping their feet, there was a ring at the door-bell. A servant entered at the same time with lights, but I motioned him away and said, "*Nyett,*" *and he left* me with only the firelight and the

fast-waning day. The outer door opened; I paid no attention to it, but kept on watching the cheerless scene outside. Men and women in long, shapeless cloaks, each one looking exactly like the other, chins deeply buried in furs, eyes and noses alone visible; thousands of tiny sledges flying past; moujiks scraping the snow up; great flakes beginning to descend, — a sight rarely vouchsafed us here; and at length a funeral procession, the mourners all trudging through the snow, with their empty carriages following.

The door was opened, the *portière* pushed aside, and "Monsieur le Comte Piloff" was announced.

"You find me almost in the dark," I exclaimed. "If you will ring, I will order the lamps."

"Not unless you wish it."

"I am not fond of twilight generally; but let us wait till it is a little darker, for this obscurity just suits my present mood."

"Willingly"; and we seated ourselves, I in a large chair by the window, and George opposite me.

"I am the only member of the family in the house," I remarked quietly.

"I know it. I met them driving."

"They are paying visits; and Tom is getting the reputation of being a wit by the entertaining way in which he describes the freezing of my ear, which took place a few days ago. My misfortune was quite a blessing for him; it gives him a continual subject of conversation."

"*Was it* a serious freeze?"

"I thought so. Perhaps you Russians would consider it a mere nothing. The resuscitation was the most disagreeable part of it. Its shape now is something wonderful, but they tell me that with persevering applications of goose-grease, I shall soon recover."

"I have no doubt of it," he answered rather absently.

There was a pause, and I looked out to where the darkness was descending, and wished that I was at home in America.

George's voice broke in upon my meditations. "I have come here to-night at the risk of seeming presumptuous and making myself ridiculous. I know you generally put the worst construction on my actions." His tone became eager, and there was a strange appeal in it. "Try to think, for once, Miss Romilly, that there is a good motive which prompts me. If there is such a thing in your nature as trust and confidence in any one, exercise it now, and believe in me. I have not been unobservant, and it seems to me your happiness is largely involved in this matter."

Could this be George's voice? What could have so moved him? I wondered. A little pang shot through my heart at his words, and I clasped my fingers together tightly as he went on: —

"I saw Thurber this morning; he had just come from you. Of course I guessed what had occurred." He hesitated for a moment, as if reluctant to proceed; then, in a more conciliatory tone, —

"Would *you* mind telling me why you refused him?"

"Indeed I should, very much," I answered quietly, recovering myself suddenly.

There was silence for a moment.

"I think I know," said he boldly. "I am sure you would be surprised if you knew how well I have read your thoughts for the last few weeks. In the first place, you imagined that Thurber was in love with your cousin."

An expectant pause, but I made no reply.

"Then you thought that he hesitated after you told him that story about your uncle."

Still I maintained an imperturbable silence.

"These two things combined to make you doubt him. It is natural for you to doubt. You made up your mind that he was not as much in love with you as he might be; and you have ruined his happiness and your own for a freak. Do you suppose I have not seen how much you care for him?"

Very calmly George spoke these words; and although they struck me like a thunder-clap, his self-control communicated itself to me. It was a little absurd, too, to be told so quietly that I was in love with this other man. George's cold, clear voice, informing me calmly of the condition of my heart! I spoke quietly in reply, though I was more inclined to laugh than do anything else.

"Are you not rather hasty in your judgment?"

"Possibly; but as you refuse to tell me why you would not have Thurber, I am forced to judge simply by appearances."

"Why should you be so excited over a small matter?"

He had shown no excitement, but I hoped to irritate him by the question. My expectations were not realized.

"It certainly should be a small matter to me whether you accept a certain suitor or not," he answered in the same calm voice; "but when that suitor is my friend, and when your conduct has led him as well as me to suppose that you did not regard him with indifference, it becomes another thing; and if I imagine that by putting the case clearly before you, and combatting any false ideas which may have crept into your mind, I can cause you to reconsider your decision, I am justified in using plain language."

Here was another thunderbolt! I had led Mr. Thurber to think I was in love with him! The darkness had settled down upon us; but the fire-light cast queer, flickering shadows into the corners.

"If," he continued, after a pause, "you have any lingering doubts of Thurber's fondness for you, I can lay them at rest. I know that ever since you came to Petersburg, he has been in love with you. All his friends have noticed the change in him. If you could have seen the state he was in after he left you this morning,"—he broke off suddenly.

"I begin to think," he went on presently, with an uneasy laugh, "that I have come on a Quixotic errand. I started on the impulse of the moment, thinking I could help *matters; but I* see that my efforts are unwelcome, *and my friendly* spirit meets with no response."

"You hinted just now," I said, in a voice which I vainly strove to render steady, "at encouragement which I had given. Did Mr. Thurber lead you to suppose that I had encouraged him?"

"Certainly not."

At this moment the servant brought in the lamp, which cast a faint pink light over to the window where I sat. I waited until the curtains were drawn, and the man had left the room. I felt that the light was betraying to George the state of excitement in which I was; for my cheeks were blazing, and my under lip quivering, as it has a disagreeable trick of doing when I am nervous. There was no hope of escaping George's scrutiny: his eyes were devouring my face, as I saw in the quick glance which I cast at him. I threw concealment to the winds, and turned upon him.

"No one was ever so cruelly unjust to me before," I cried, with a break in my voice, "as to call me a flirt. If there is one bad quality in this world which I lack, it is that. Anything" (proudly forcing back the tears), "anything you choose to call me I will not protest against, except that."

I folded my hands over the arms of my chair, sat bolt upright, and faced him boldly.

"It is a piece of unwarrantable impertinence for you to talk to me in this way," I continued.

He looked at me earnestly for a moment, then dropped his eyes on the carpet, and murmured, "I *fear* so."

There was silence for some seconds.

"I did not mean," he said, looking at me again, "that you deliberately flirted with him. You women have a way of encouraging a man, — unconsciously, I suppose" (with a touch of bitterness). "You flatter him by smiling at him, and listening to his words as if you were reading an entertaining book; but when he is fool enough to think this means that you love him, he finds out his mistake; and the woman is considered magnanimous if she does not laugh at him for his folly. My God!" he cried, jumping up and pacing the room with a heavy step, "do you know what it is to be in love? Do you know" (stopping in front of me, and looking at me with a severity which frightened me), — "do you know what it is to be so bound up in a person that her every look, her every breath, is something dear and precious to you? That nothing which this world or the next can offer seems of any value to you, without her love?" Then, turning on his heel, and walking away from me with a contemptuous laugh: "What insufferable foolishness for me to talk to you like this! You have never fathomed the meaning of the word love."

He threw himself into the chair opposite me again.

"Count Piloff!" I exclaimed, trembling from head to foot, but resolved to stem the torrent of his vehemence, "You shall say no more till you have heard me. What I may think of you for your conduct is, doubtless, of little importance to you; but you shall know the reason I refused Mr. Thurber, and then you shall leave me" (with a feeble attempt at dignity).

"I *beg your pardon*," he said, more calmly; "I *forgot myself.*"

"I do not love Mr. Thurber," I continued; "therefore, I refused him." I looked steadily at George's downcast head as I spoke. "Many years ago, when I was seventeen years old, I was engaged to be married. The man whom I loved dearly enough to promise to marry, in spite of the opposition of my family, was taken from me by death. Since then I have seen no one who has tempted me to be false to my first love. I give you this explanation, not because you have any right to it, but to justify myself. Now, I hope I shall never see you again!" and I buried my face in my hands, feeling that it was useless to struggle against the sobs which would make themselves heard.

The faint crackle of the fire was the only other sound in the room for a few minutes. Presently George's hand touched my arm, and rested there for a second, as he said, in a low, gentle voice, —

"Don't cry, my darling! I love you, and I cannot bear to see you cry."

I raised my head suddenly, and turned my tear-stained face on him.

"What do you tell me?" I cried.

He met my astounded look with a pair of honest, sorrowful eyes. I dropped back into my chair, and covered my face again, while silence fell upon us.

"I suppose," said George sadly, "that I am doubly hateful to you now. I will go away from here to-night, and you shall never see me again, if that is your wish. It is a humiliation to have confessed that, in spite of *your contempt*, your want of confidence in me, and the

many times you have cut me to the heart by the plain expression of your dislike, I am weak enough to care for you. I never meant you to know it. Now that I have betrayed myself, however" (biting his mustache nervously, while I dropped my hands in my lap, and looked straight into his face), "it is as well for me to tell you frankly that my future seems dark, and my whole life worthless. You once told me I had no depth of feeling. You are as incapable of measuring the anguish I feel as a child would be! Would to heaven I had 'no depth of feeling'! In that case it would have given me no pain to see the poorly concealed aversion with which you always have turned from me."

He broke off abruptly, with a short, bitter laugh.

"I grow garrulous," he cried. "Why do you not tell me that I bore you? I came to plead for Thurber, and I spend the time talking about myself. I should never have taken any steps in the matter had I not thought that your happiness was involved, — Thurber is nothing to me. I will go away" (rising to his feet); but I put out my hand, and murmured, —

"No, not yet. I must speak to you before you go."

He sat down obediently and waited. I looked at him attentively. He was surely in his right mind. How blind I had been, — how stupidly blind!

"I hardly know what I am saying," I began, "for I have a splitting headache. But I want to tell you that I think you must be mistaken, but — but — I am — " I rubbed my forehead and hesitated for a word.

George looked at me more calmly than before I began to speak, and waited.

"I am very sorry," I said slowly and disconsolately, plaiting up my pocket-handkerchief in my warm fingers. Stealing another glance at him, I added: —

"I did not mean it when I said I hoped I should never see you again. I hope you will continue to come the same as ever, and that you will give no one any cause to suspect what you have told me" (in the same dismal tone, playing with my rings as if my one object in life was to see how near they would come to the ends of my fingers without slipping off. George watched my experiments with the greatest apparent interest). "It is very strange to me," I went on, after a pause, "that you should care for any one whom you have just declared to have no faith in any human being, whom you consider a coquette, and who has not heart enough to know what love means." I stopped, but George made no attempt to reply.

"I am sure that you will change —" Here I was suddenly interrupted.

My companion pushed his chair back, and jumped up impulsively.

"The only hope I have," he cried, "is that I shall change. But just now you must not tell me that you are sure I shall. Oh!" (with a sudden change of manner) "don't mind what I say!"

He walked over to the chimney, where he looked into the bed of coals as if to read something in the glowing *fire.*

"I was unkind as well as rude to you," he went on, never removing his gaze from the fire. "Forgive me! In future you shall not be reminded of this folly."

He came nearer and stood in front of me, saying, "You should be willing to forgive me for the disagreeable things I have said, when you remember how small a part I have in your life. Only a few weeks out of a lifetime! Even if I had power to make them all unhappy, it would be a small proportion to the happy weeks which some one more fortunate than I will give you. For I am sure that your heart will some day be more fully awakened than it is now. What does a girl of seventeen know of love? Believe me, there is a depth of devotion in your nature which has never been sounded. I am sorry" (walking back to the fireplace and speaking very sadly) "I am sorry that I made you cry." He added wistfully, after a moment, "I suppose I may go now?"

I walked over to where he stood in front of the fire, and looked up at him with a weak attempt at a smile.

"I want to ask you something," I said. "But you must promise not to be hurt or angry with me for asking the question."

"I promise," he replied gravely.

"Did you make a bet at the club that you would marry an heiress within six months?"

He grew white to his very lips, and, moving his hand impetuously, he swept poker and tongs to the floor with a great clatter.

Although *I was* certainly deeply in earnest, this little

incident amused me, and I smiled. George paid no more attention to the havoc he had caused than he did to the snow-storm outside.

"Who told you that?" he cried.

"Hush!" I answered. "No matter who told me."

"And you could believe that of me!" he murmured, with a look of concentrated mortification and sorrow.

"No!" I exclaimed impulsively. "No, no! I don't believe it."

"But you did. Well, it is as false as the heart of the man or woman who told you."

Here he glanced at the prostrate tongs, and concluded to pick them up; and I observed, in a melancholy tone, "There is the poker, too."

"I will go away," he said, grasping the poker absently in his hand, "and you must try to forget all I have said. Good-by" (looking at me wistfully).

I put out my hand; he held it for a moment, then rushed at the door, discovered that he had left his hat, and came back, still clinging to the poker.

What demon of nervousness was it which made me burst out laughing when he laid the poker down on the table and took up his hat! He looked at me with a sort of dull reproach.

"I know I am very ridiculous," he said.

"It is not that," I cried. "It is — I don't know what is the matter with me. I am nervous."

This was not strictly true. Almost every man is somewhat ridiculous when he is making love to a woman who does not care for him; and George, grasp-

ing the poker instead of his hat, was irresistibly funny.

After he had gone I spent an hour in reflection. All my self-examination fails to convict me of coquetry with either of these men. I am very unhappy, for I have made them so; and I have no doubt things will be uncomfortable.

I am ashamed that I should have believed Sacha's story. Is it club gossip, or did he tell a deliberate falsehood? I like George more than I would have believed possible a month ago. Still, I think I prefer Mr. Thurber.

CHAPTER XIV.

MARIE TALKE.

Monday, January —.

I AWOKE yesterday morning with a severe headache and influenza. The exciting scene of the day before was still fresh in my mind. If I had chosen to weep all day, no one would have been any wiser, for my nose and eyes were both as red and swollen as a gallon of tears could have made them.

"You cannot go to the theatre to-night!" Grace exclaimed in horror when she saw me.

"Serves her right," said Tom. "The idea of a woman who was born and brought up in New England, going to the theatre on Sunday! I can't understand how you harbored the notion for a moment."

"It is one chance in a lifetime," interposed Judith. "A gala-night, when every one in the house will be the guest of the Emperor; and all the wedding party there too! You must go, Dorris, even if you are ill enough to be in bed."

"I shall be well enough to go," I answered calmly.

Tom remarked in a resigned tone that he had no control over the women of his family.

In the course of the day Mr. Thurber came in. He

told us that he was going into the interior of Russia for a month or six weeks, with some other young men. He managed to say to me in a low voice, —

"I must see you before I go. Can you give me an hour in the morning?"

"Come and dine with us," I answered aloud. Tom cordially seconded the invitation, and Mr. Thurber accepted.

I made my toilet before dinner, enveloped myself in a huge shawl, and, provided with a smelling-bottle, went down.

"Tom," said I anxiously, "do I look so very ugly?"

My brother-in-law surveyed me silently, and then expressed himself in the following candid way: —

"Your dress is a stunner, Dorris, and makes you look first-rate from a distance; and I don't suppose any one in the theatre will notice your face. You are pale, though" (reluctantly), "except the tip end of your nose, and your eyelids; and, by Jove!" (sympathetically) "how ill you look! Don't you think you had better stay at home?"

"No," I replied dismally, wrapping my shawl round me again. "I don't care how I look," — which was as true as such speeches generally are.

After dinner Judith went away to dress, and Tom, with many apologies, took Grace off to their regular weekly occupation of making up accounts. Mr. Thurber and I were left alone.

Suffice it to say that when that interview was ended I found *myself pledged* to a certain extent. I was sur-

prised to find that it was so when I thought it over afterwards. I could not tell Mr. Thurber that I disliked him; neither could I say that I never should love him. I have quite an affection for him, and I told him so. Then I could not refuse to try and like him a little more, and that is what I have promised. When he returns I am to give him a decided answer. I feel infinitely relieved now, and I have no doubt it will end in my marrying him.

The question next came into my mind, Should I tell George? It seemed to me unnecessary, and I resolved to be guided by circumstances. I was driven through the illuminated streets in rather an absent frame of mind. Patient crowds were standing about, waiting for glimpses of grandeur.

When we reached the theatre, the whole of the building was covered with gas-jets, forming the initials "A" and "M," crowns, stars, and various other devices. The scene inside the theatre was truly regal. In the low corridors, as we entered, were crowds of officials in full uniform, hurrying about in excitement. When we opened the door and stepped into our box, a blaze of splendor burst upon us. The house was made brilliant by a row of electric lights, in addition to the ordinary chandelier and gas jets.

The prevailing colors in the theatre are crimson and gold. The imperial box — thrice as high and as wide as the others — is directly opposite the stage, on the second story. There are five tiers of boxes above the *parquet*. As we looked down on the floor, not a plain

black coat was to be seen. The parquet was entirely filled with gentlemen, and was one mass of gorgeous color. Uniforms, orders, decorations, gold and silver lace, swords, and bald heads, were mingled in a wonderful manner. For once the other sex rivalled ours in brilliancy of attire. Not a shoulder without a bright ribbon across it, indicating the order of St. Alexander, or St. Vladimir, or Saint Somebody Else.

"If all those ribbons were taken off, and pieced together," I exclaimed, "they would stretch round the world."

The gentlemen's costumes were so elaborate that I sighed to think how much time must have been spent in the arrangement of them. The parquet was a living and continually moving mass of gold, silver, and bright colors.

The row of boxes which surrounded this was filled with ladies, — fans, flashing jewels, white arms and necks, and rich dresses. The great imperial box was empty. On the right of it were those reserved for the diplomatic corps. The representatives of different countries seemed trying to rival each other in splendor of dress, — always excepting the American minister, who on these state occasions is conspicuous by his plain black dress, and absence of decorations. There were the Chinese, in yellow, two of them wearing large spectacles; there were Persians wearing the black, and Turks the red, fez, — each nationality in a different, gay uniform.

On the left of the imperial box not a gentleman was

visible. The wives and families of the ministers of the empire occupied the seats.

To the top of the house nothing was to be seen but an array of ball-dresses, jewels, and uniforms. Even the members of the orchestra were in uniform.

We had time to criticise everything; for it was nine o'clock before there were any signs of preparation in the imperial box. At last the Grand Chamberlain, the Minister of the Household, and some others entered the empty *lôge*, to which all eyes had been directed for some time, and some orders were given to an Arabian attendant about the arrangement of the chairs.

This Arab was as black as ink. He wore a red and white turban; a short black jacket, trimmed with gold; a scarlet sash, and full red trousers. The whole audience breathlessly watched him as he arranged the chairs. The orchestra turned, and faced the imperial box; and so did every one else. The leader stood with his baton uplifted, ready to give the signal.

There were a few moments of deathly stillness; then, at a sign from the great box, the leader's baton fell. Every soul in the house rose, the Russian Hymn burst forth, and cheers rent the air as the Emperor came in with the bride. These cheers were prolonged, and repeated when the Tsarevitch made his appearance.

I think that was the most impressive moment of my life. I was one cold chill from head to foot. The people shouted, the Tsar bowed, and the hymn and cheers were continued.

This sovereign's face is to me inexpressibly sad and

touching, — as if he bore the sins and griefs of his people all on his heart, and was lifted so far above human sympathy that no one but his God had power to comfort him. If I ever had the desire to be an emperor, one look at Alexander Second would have been sufficient to rid me of it. He looks as though he had never known what it is to be happy; as though he had felt from babyhood every whit of the responsibility which weighs upon monarchs. I feel a deep reverence for this man, who has freed his people from slavery, and many Christians from persecution, and who now is blamed by the world because he does not think it best to do more. I like to think, though, that his liberated serfs love him, and that posterity will do him justice.

Here I have left the Emperor standing all this time, while I have been wandering in political fields.

The German Hymn followed the Russian. I was rather bewildered by it; for I thought it was "God save the Queen," and wondered what propriety there was in playing it on this occasion.

The music ceased, and the cheers burst forth again, louder and fuller than ever. The bride and groom were in the centre of the box; on her right was the Emperor, dressed in Cossack uniform, — a long, scarlet coat, plaited in at the waist, with silver trimmings. The Tsarevitch wore the same kind of uniform.

The bride wore the ribbon indicating the order of St. Catherine. The ladies of the imperial family exhibited magnificent diadems and necklaces. The Grand Duchess Constantine's necklace covered her from throat to

waist, and was composed of the most magnificent emeralds I ever saw. The blaze and glitter which filled the imperial box was something like what I used to read about in the fairy tales. The rest of the house, which had seemed magnificent a moment before, now looked quite plain in comparison.

I seem to deal in superlatives, but even with their aid I do scant justice to the scene. I was gazing in open wonder and admiration, actually dazed by the magnificence, when the familiar music of Faust broke upon my ear, and I turned to see Albani in the third act of that opera.

Sacha smiled upon us from a distance, and made his way slowly towards us. George had entered the box some time before, and, having bowed to us, leaned back against the wall and surveyed the house through his glass. It seemed to me that my interview with him must have been a dream. There was not a shadow of embarrassment is his manner, not a trace of consciousness.

While he still stood there, Sacha came in. I bowed very coldly, and turned my back on him. When he had gone away, Alice asked me, laughing, —

"Why did you snub the poor fellow like that?"

"Because I don't like him. I despise him."

"I would not," said George's voice behind me, most unexpectedly. "He is not worth it."

"Perhaps not," I responded, in some excitement; "but I cannot look upon people in that indifferent *way.*"

George said no more, and I gave my attention to the music. Massini sang poorly; so did Albani. There was no applause, etiquette forbidding.

A few opera-glasses were levelled at the imperial box, but few were bold enough to commit such a flagrant breach of etiquette. I must confess that I took a few surreptitious glances from the back of our *lôge*.

When the curtain went down, the imperial party retired to a drawing-room. Tea, ices, and cakes were served to the guests by servants in the imperial livery. In the *foyer*, tables were spread with various costly dishes and wines, and ornamented with plants and flowers. The walls of the room were lined with evergreen trees.

Having taken a look at this with the ambassador, I returned to my place, but there were so many gentlemen gathered about that I proposed to my companion to return to the *foyer*. He acceded to my request with apparent eagerness.

I really felt wretchedly ill, and the draughts set me to shivering. I could hardly keep my teeth from chattering, and was thankful that the ambassador talked on without noticing the state I was in.

After a time George passed me. He stopped short, and looked at me piercingly.

"You are ill!" he exclaimed. "What is the matter?"

"Only a cold which I have had for two or three days."

"Come with me," he said authoritatively.

I hesitated, and looked at the ambassador, who had

been buttonholed by another diplomatic gentleman, and was talking earnestly.

George, with a gesture of impatience, took my hand, put it inside his arm, and walked me off to a sheltered nook, where he made me sit down. Then he brought me a tiny glass of dark-colored liquid.

I shook my head. "I can't drink brandy."

He frowned. "Really you must drink it, Miss Romilly," he said persuasively.

I took it and drained the glass. The warmth it imparted to my chilled body was most welcome. It crept over me from head to foot in a comforting way.

George stood and watched me for a few minutes, then smiled a little, saying,—

"You look a trifle less blue than you did. I mean, blue in color."

"Tom told me," said I, in an aggrieved tone, "that I looked very well at a distance."

"So you do," said Count Piloff, still smiling; "but I was quite near you, and I never saw any one look so ill."

A group of ladies and gentlemen came walking past us, and, stopping near by, continued a conversation which they had been holding in French.

"It was all a misunderstanding, you know," said one of the ladies to an older one.

I had stopped talking to observe the group, as one will do in such places, and was still looking at them with a sort of idle curiosity.

"*Oh no,* I assure you!" cried the other. "He be-

haved in the most dishonorable way, and she married Prince Simonieff out of spite."

I looked at George with amusement, wondering what piece of scandal I was about to hear. To my surprise he did not return my glance. There came a sudden red flame over his face, which passed away and left him pallid. With bent head and downcast eyes he sat there in silence, so absorbed that he was apparently unconscious of my presence.

I listened with vague curiosity for the next words which fell from the lips of the lady in front. It was the younger one who spoke: —

"I heard that he came to the house one night in a beastly state of intoxication, and that the engagement was broken the next morning."

"True, and not true," responded the other. "He went there when he had been drinking, and he told her some plain truths, — what they were you can imagine; Marie's life is public property now. He ended by saying that nothing would induce him to marry her, since he had discovered how false she was to him as well as to her other lovers; that it was only because she had declared her intention of dying if he did not marry her that he had become engaged to her; and after that night he considered himself bound to her no longer. The next day her brother insulted him in the club. There were some words, but the matter was hushed up, and all that society heard afterwards was that Marie Talke married Prince Simonieff and became one of the fastest *women* ever received at respectable houses.

and that Sacha Talke was killed in a mysterious duel abroad. But I happen to know that it was Count Piloff who killed him."

I looked at my companion, expecting to see him rise in anger and tell this woman that her statement was false. He sat still, showing no emotion except in the deathly paleness of his face, and a strange glitter in his eyes, which were fixed upon mine.

The group walked on. I spoke almost fiercely, —

"Have n't you enough courage to tell that person what you think of her? Are you afraid of a woman?"

The half scornful smile on his lips gave place to one so gentle, the hard gleam in his eyes softened to such a tender look, that I hardly knew him. He said in a low voice, —

"Is it possible that you do not believe it?"

"Believe it?" I repeated. "Do you suppose I think so badly of you as that?"

He sighed, and his eyes dropped.

"After all," he said slowly, "what difference does it make whether you feel a shade or two more or less of contempt for me?"

He reflected for a moment, and then looked at me.

"I should be a sorry rascal if all that she said were true; yet," with a sudden tightening of the breath, though his eyes never flinched from their steady gaze, "some of it is true."

Seeing that he waited for me, I responded calmly, "That does not surprise me. There is generally a *foundation* of truth in these stories. How much of *this is true?*"

"I will tell you some time, but not now; for the ballet has begun, and you must return to the box."

His manner had suddenly become cold and formal, and so it remained until we bade each other good-night at the door of the theatre.

Between my troublesome thoughts and my still more troublesome cold, I rested ill that night. George was surprised that I did not believe that story about him. He must think that I hate and despise him, to believe such a tale as that. There was a throb of indignation in my heart when that stranger so indifferently spoke the words which maligned his character, and I felt inclined to remonstrate with her myself when I saw that George continued silent.

It is strange how my feelings have changed towards him. If he were not in love with me, perhaps I should still think him conceited and insincere; but it is astonishing how that one fact changes everything. I don't know whether it is vanity or some other trait, lurking in the shadowy part of my character, which makes me think favorably of any one who likes me. Certainly, I have a decided preference for people who exhibit that good taste.

Tuesday.

This letter was brought to me yesterday afternoon:—

MY DEAR MISS ROMILLY, — I promised to tell you some time my version of the story which you overheard last night. *I am* sure I shall find it impossible to relate

it to you, and I should make myself tiresome by the length of time I should consume: so I am going to write it down, in order that you may read it at your leisure, and leave off when you like; or, if it bores you, put it away unread until your memory of me grows so dim that all the disagreeable part of our acquaintance has faded, and you take up my letter to bring back the ghost of this short winter, which is fast drawing to an end.

First, I would thank you — and you little know how sincerely I say it — for showing me this evening that you are not so utterly devoid of confidence in me as I had supposed. It is a bitter thing for a man to feel that the woman who, in a quiet, most unobtrusive way, without knowledge of her own, has crept into his heart, and filled it so completely that nothing will ever take her place, — it is a bitter thing for this man to know that the woman feels nothing but contempt for him. You showed me last night that you had learned to trust me somewhat. It will be my own fault if I ever sink back to my old level in your esteem. If this new trust in me should not be sufficient to convince you of the truth of all that is contained in this letter, you have only to refer to Nicolas, in whom, I am aware, you have implicit faith.

Do you know that I am thirty-seven years old? Think what a mere boy I was fifteen years ago! It was then that this episode occurred. I confess frankly that I was a wild fellow, and my father had a great deal of trouble with me.

We came home from America, where all my boyhood *had been* passed, and where I had indulged in an infi-

nite number of flirtations, and had run so into debt that my father was glad to start me in a new country. But the change was not an improvement. I ran through a year's allowance in a few months, and brought in a harvest of debts. Launched forth into Russian society at twenty-one, petted because I was new and wealthy and well-born, what wonder that I got into all sorts of mischief?

I was dazzled at first by the brilliancy about me, but I soon began to regret America; moments of terrible depression and homesickness came upon me. I felt like a man without a country,—a stranger in my own land, yet obliged to reside there. I begged my father to allow me to go back; but he was inflexible. I must have a "career" in my native country, among my own people; and a career was accordingly looked up for me,—an appointment in a foreign office.

Perhaps I weary you with details. I will not dwell on these trifles.

Soon after my appointment, and while I was still suffering with homesickness, I met a woman who became the strongest influence which my life had yet experienced. Her name was Marie, Countess Talke. She was seven years my senior, and a widow. She took me under her patronage and protection; and as she was one of the most popular women in the fast set which I affected, I was proud of her preference.

Every day I was expected to call upon her, every evening to meet her at some ball or party, and to sup *with her at some* house afterwards. There was an old

officer of the Guards, who had been her favorite before my arrival. He used to shake his head at me, and laugh in a cynical way, and say he pitied me; that Marie was "an exacting little devil."

Her exactions, however, flattered me. You must remember that I was very young. I do not pretend that I had no fondness for her: I was very fond of her. I thought we were true friends, and I laughed at those who suggested that Countess Talke might be induced to marry again; for, I said, she looked upon me as a younger brother. I must have been very young! But I soon lost my youth under her tutelage: she taught me to distrust every human being whom I met.

A pure-hearted woman like yourself can no more understand the immense influence which Marie Talke and those of her stamp wield over a young, impressionable man than you can realize the vividness with which every sin of my life stands before me when I am with you, until I feel that I merit all your contempt, and am not fit to be in your presence. I thank Heaven that you cannot understand it.

This flirtation, as we should call it in America, went on for nearly two seasons. Then I learned, by accident as I supposed, how Marie felt towards me, — that she would die of grief if I did not marry her. I, poor fool, believed it. As an act of great magnanimity, and also because I was fond of her in a certain way, I consented to marry her. Kind, was I not? Then, indeed, I was conceited!

The wedding day was set, and Marie's brother, her

only near relative, came to Petersburg, to be present on the great occasion. He was a coarse fellow, and almost the first thing he did after we had been made acquainted with each other was to borrow a thousand roubles of me. I drew my own conclusions as to the kind of man he was, from that.

Two days before that set for the wedding, Nicolas came to me with a story which sent a thrill of horror through me. He had been bitterly opposed to the match, but, like my father, had resigned himself to what he supposed to be the inevitable. I refused to believe what he told me, and he gave me proofs which I could not doubt.

Marie had been engaged to two other men at the time she promised to marry me. One of them, a fellow nearly as young as I, who was desperately in love with her, had blown his brains out when he found out her falsehood. The other consented to her marriage with me, but continued his visits to her, and furnished all the money for her trousseau!

This was overwhelming, and I leave you to imagine its effect upon my mind. I went to her (not under the influence of liquor, as you heard), told her all I knew, and she had the audacity to deny it! Any lingering feeling of tenderness was killed by this, and I confronted her with proofs of her own guilt. I will not weary you with an account of what followed. Marie's brother undertook to make some trouble, but he could not change the facts, and he soon went away to his home in Austria.

It was a terrible awakening, and to this day I feel sorry for myself, as I look back, and see how utterly adrift I was for a time. This analysis of my feelings can have little interest for you, however, and I feel inclined to apologize for writing anything besides the bare facts.

Marie married Prince Simonieff a year or two after, and now lives in Paris. Her brother was killed in a duel, I believe, but not by me. This is all; and it is not such a horrible story as those ladies made it, is it? It had its influence in making me what I am; and if you knew my whole life as you now do this episode, I think you would throw the kind mantle of charity over some of my faults. I wonder if you will ever have patience to read as far as this?

G. P.

I read this letter to the end, and then it dropped into my lap, while I clasped my hands behind my head and tried to picture Countess Talke to myself. The only part of George's story in which I did not place implicit confidence was his assertion that he was not in love with that woman. Undoubtedly he thought so now, as he looked back, but he must have been desperately in love at the time, — much more so than he is with me.

There is one strange thing about George: he has never given me one word of praise, except in this letter, where he calls me pure-hearted, — and surely he could hardly say less than that. When he has spoken to me of myself, it has always been to blame me. There is *the door-bell.* Who can it be?

Evening.

It was George who came this afternoon.

"Oh," I cried, "I am alone again, except Tom, who is taking a Russian lesson in there," indicating the library.

"I am glad you are prudent enough to stay in the house until you get better of your cold."

"I am saving myself for the next court ball," I responded confidentially.

Count Piloff seated himself on a little *causeuse*, and I placed myself by his side. He looked startled for a second, but I paid no attention. I was determined to make myself agreeable, and to show that my dislike for him had vanished.

"I have just read your letter," I began.

He smiled somewhat uneasily as he said, "Are you quite sure that you read to the end?"

"Quite, and I —" I was going to say that I enjoyed it very much, but I checked myself in time, — "I am very glad you wrote it."

"You are kind," he said formally.

"I wish to correct an impression which you seem to have," I went on courageously. "You have mentioned it several times, and you are quite mistaken about it" (getting a trifle incoherent in my words, but clinging to my idea). "I do not dislike or despise you, Count Piloff. I acknowledge that I used to do so, and I tried to prejudice Judith against you. But I don't dislike you at all now, and I think in time" (looking at him for encouragement, but meeting only a view of one brown

cheek) "I think if I stay long enough we may become very good friends."

He did not reply, and still kept his face turned away; so, after a brief pause, I continued, "Real friends, you know, such as Tom and I are."

With a movement which was so sudden that it made me jump, he started up, looked at me with an ugly frown, and muttered in a voice of suppressed rage, —

"I will not be your friend!"

Biting his mustache savagely, he surveyed my small figure, while I shrank as far back into the corner of the *causeuse* as possible.

"I will either be," he went on presently, "all or nothing. Friend!" with a contemptuous laugh, darting another fierce glance at me. "I would rather you would hate me than to be my friend! What satisfaction would the sort of friendship which you give Tom be to me?"

Another short, bitter laugh finished this speech, and he turned impatiently away from me.

By this time my natural spirit, which had been somewhat dashed by his reception of what was meant to be an extremely conciliatory remark, asserted itself, and I spoke up promptly, with a flaming face, —

"Very well. Of course I can hate you if you prefer it, and I shall find it easy to do so if you repeat this often. You have talked so much about my having more confidence in you, and have made so many sarcastic remarks about my dislike for you, that I naturally *supposed you* wished to change it all. If I am mis-

taken — and I see I am, — I will — yes, I will — " Here I became involved, and forgot how I was intending to finish, so I wound up rather feebly — " do as you say."

He took a long, lingering look at my angry form. I could hardly believe my own eyes when I saw laughter in his! Was he laughing at me or himself? A smile quivered on his lips, and there was hearty amusement in the gray eyes. My wrath was rapidly cooling; but I strove to retire from the field with dignity.

" I see nothing to laugh at," I said, in a superior manner.

"Neither do I," he responded, " except that I behave so like a child, and you are so easily excited. Now, most women would have been flattered at what I said. You, on the contrary, became a small virago, for the moment."

" I am not like most women, if most women are flattered to have their proffered friendship thrust back so unceremoniously. I don't understand such flattery, and I prefer to have no more of it."

" Do you know," he said, looking down on me intently, " that you have a violent temper, Dorris? "

My eyes sought his with a questioning look, and found there such an expression of tenderness that they fell to the carpet again.

" Yes — no," I answered, leaning on the back of a chair near me; then, with a flash of defiance, taking in for the first time the full sense of his question, " I think even a *saint would* be angry at what you said. Why *do you call me* Dorris? " (with renewed dignity.)

"If you are going to be my friend, of course I must say Dorris," he returned, leaning on the other side of the chair, thus preventing me from tilting it back and forth, and still looking as if he wished to laugh.

"I will not be your friend," I answered sullenly. "You said you did not wish it; and now I will not."

"You cannot be my enemy, for you have told me that you don't dislike me; and if you will be neither friend nor enemy, there is only one thing left for you to be, Dorris" (pleadingly).

Fortunately, at this moment my common sense asserted itself. I gave up the chair for support, and stood upright.

"True," I said; "and that one thing is indifferent. You are talking nonsense, Count Piloff."

"I dare say I am" (gravely); "and as I only came to see how your cold was, I will stay no longer. I have talked nonsense, as you say. Forget it: I promise never to offend again"; and before I could reply, he was gone.

I did not think he would leave so suddenly, and I would have liked to ask him a few questions; but perhaps it is better that I did not.

CHAPTER XV.

LE BAL DES PALMIERS.

February 18.

ALICE has been here, has followed me into my room, and has given me a long dissertation on the inconvenience of single life. It seems to me that Alice has grown somewhat worldly wise, and perhaps a trifle vain. She appeared to be quite in earnest, as she set forth the advantages of marriage. She began cautiously, so that I did not know what she was leading me up to, until I heard myself saying that I would not marry a Russian, under any circumstances.

"Why not?" she asked, with a little pink flush on her cheek.

"Oh, I don't know," I answered feebly.

"I suppose you are not blind," she continued. "You must have seen that there is a certain Russian whose happiness depends on you."

"What a hackneyed expression!" I exclaimed, trying to laugh.

Alice began to examine a bracelet which lay on my dressing-table.

"I wish you would tell me, Dorris, why you keep *George hanging* about you in this way. Every one

thinks he wishes to marry Judith; but I know my brother-in-law better than any of them, and I am not deceived" (nodding her pretty head with an air of superior wisdom). "If ever I have seen a man madly, wildly in love, it is he. This is all the more remarkable, because generally he is so cold and unmoved. Nicolas says it is nonsense, — that George cares for no one, unless it is Judith; but all the same, I know as well as if he had told me!"

"How very pleasant," I said musingly, "to have the family so interested and confidential about me and my affairs! Did Nicolas ask George if he was in love with me?"

Alice put on her most persuasive tone: "You must not be angry with me because I am interested in what concerns you. Who should be, my dear, if not your sister? Although we have been separated for so long, I love you as much as Grace does."

This touched me; and I responded, with a smile, "I am not angry; but neither do I see why you should think George cares particularly for me. There is surely nothing in his manner to indicate it."

My sister shook her head: "I believe you know it as well as I do. I have watched him, and I can see how a new light comes into his eyes every time they rest on you, — a light which I never saw there before in my life. I have noticed how he watches you stealthily, and how black his face is when, in talking with other men, you look up at them in a confiding way, as you have a *habit of doing.*"

Here, aghast at Alice's words, I strove to interrupt; but nothing could stop the flow of her eloquence.

"And then, when you say something to him suddenly, he flushes like a girl, though he answers in as cool and measured a tone as usual," she went on calmly. "Your sarcasm hurts him, as no one else has power to do. I can understand George perfectly. What I do not understand is you."

She stopped at last, and waited for me to speak.

"What is it about me that you don't comprehend?" I asked. "I should have said that I was much more transparent than George; and you seem to have discovered the most wonderful things in him. Tell me, as you have been such a close observer, what you have noticed in me, and perhaps I can interpret it for you."

"Well," she began thoughtfully, "I have seen generally a quiet indifference. But," she continued, with her eyes fixed on my face, while a reflective look took possession of her own, "I have seen something else. You have been petulant sometimes, which one never is to a person for whom one feels only indifference. Two or three times I have noticed a look of real pleasure which came into your eyes when George made his appearance unexpectedly. One moment you ignore his presence, and the next you look at and speak to him as if he were the only person in the world."

"Enough!" I exclaimed, putting out my hand imploringly. "You make me out a perfect coquette!"

"*Almost,*" she assented. "I have wondered, once or *twice, if you were.*"

"Do you mean to say," I gasped, "that I have really acted in the way you describe?"

"It is certainly true, Dorris. That is what puzzles me. I could not make up my mind whether you cared for him or not."

"I had no idea that I behaved like that," I murmured. "How very foolish I must have seemed!"

"No one else noticed it," said Alice consolingly; "except George," she added, after a slight pause.

"Did he notice it?" I cried, turning round upon her. "Did he speak to you of it?"

"No, no!" she exclaimed hastily. "How you jump at conclusions! He has never exchanged a word with me on the subject; but I judged, by his manner and expression, that he noticed all these little things. It was in studying their effect upon him that I learned his secret."

"Dear, dear!" I sighed. "What an Argus eye has been upon us all this time, while we were blissfully unconscious, — thinking that our secrets were locked in our own breasts!"

We both laughed, and I went on in a brisk tone: "Really, Alice, you are all wrong. George is probably in love with any one rather than myself; and I am not in the least inclined to marry him, even if he should ask me, — which, I can assure you, he has never done, nor do I believe he has any intention of it. If your suspicions had been in another direction," I added carelessly, "they would have been more correct."

Alice took me up eagerly: "Chilton Thurber, you

mean? Any one could see that he was devoted to you; but I never thought you returned his affection. Do you mean that you are fond of him?"

"Well," I said meditatively, "I don't know that I can go so far as to say that. No," I continued slowly, "I am not desperately in love with him; but I have promised to think about him."

My sister's face fell.

"I am so disappointed!" she said dolefully.

"Why?"

"Because I thought it would be so pleasant for you to marry George and live near me. And I am sorry for him, too; for, whatever you may say, I know he is in love with you. It will kill him, I know it will!" she continued tragically.

I laughed. "You are not serious, Alice."

"Indeed I am. If you marry Chilton Thurber—"

"Hush! not so loud. You must not repeat what I have told you to a living soul. And, to confess the truth" (confidentially), "I don't much think I shall marry him."

Alice shook her head mournfully. "You don't care for George as I hoped you did, if you could make Mr. Thurber any sort of promise to think about him."

I looked rather uneasily at my companion as I said ruefully, "I seem to be somewhat involved in my love affairs, but I hope to come safely through."

"I hope you will."

She looked at my clock. "Half an hour late for Nicolas! *Good-by*, my dear. *A ce soir.*" And she

hurried away, leaving me to comfort myself as best I might. I have found very little consolation so far; but I really think Alice exaggerates, and I must turn my attention to my toilet for this evening.

I appeared in a wonderful combination of satin and gauze last night, and felt quite proud of myself as I took one last lingering look at my reflection in the long glass.

"There is something about that pinkish ashes-of-roses color," said Tom, with the air of one who knows what he is talking about, "that suits you to a T."

"Oh, you poor goose!" laughed Grace. "That is cream color, not ashes-of-roses."

"Well, whatever you call it, it is mighty becoming."

"Yes," I responded with some vanity, "it really is."

"If you stand there looking at yourself much longer," cried Tom, "Alice will not wait for you."

"Come, Judith," I said with dignity; and together we descended the stairs and entered the carriage, which was waiting for us.

There was another carriage standing at the door, and Alice put her head out of the window and charged us to wear our thickest wraps. "It is bitterly cold," she added.

Enveloped in our furs, we did not feel it. In front of the palace a huge fire was burning merrily; there was an iron railing about it, and here a crowd of coachmen were huddled together, taking advantage of the warmth provided for them.

I felt strangely excited, and my cheeks glowed as if

there were coals of fire on them. We soon reached the ball-room, where an aristocratic crowd was awaiting the entrance of the Emperor, and we had a chance to exercise our patience for some time.

"Have you seen the King of Adrianople?" Nicolas asked me.

"Whom do you mean?"

"That young fellow who is talking with Madame Kirovieff," he returned. "That is he."

"But why do you call him the King of Adrianople?"

"It is a name he got in the army. Have you not heard the story?"

I confessed my ignorance, and Nicolas related the following anecdote: —

"Last year, when General Gourko's army was lying about Adrianople, after the tedious passage of the Balkans, there was a certain officer, not above the rank of a captain, who demanded permission of his commander to enter Adrianople with his company. The Turks were about to evacuate the city, and the Russians intended to enter the next morning; but this gentleman said he was tired of sleeping out in the wet, and he wished to go into the town, get a good supper, and make himself comfortable for the night. The desired permission was given in a half-contemptuous way, and many were the laughs raised at the expense of the young officer, who expected to drive away eight or ten thousand Turks with only one hundred men.

"Just after nightfall the last detachment of the Turkish army was at the railway station, making preparations

to embark on a train which was going to Constantinople. Two or three pachas and several officers were taking a hot supper in the restaurant at the station, refreshing themselves for their journey. Confusion reigned, each individual looking after his own effects, when there came a tremendous rattle ot musketry-fire on all sides, with hoots and yells as from thousands of throats.

"Supposing the whole Russian army was upon them, the frightened pachas hurried the troops into the train, and started off at full speed of steam; and the gallant Russian not only slept comfortably in the railway station that night, but devoured the pachas' hot supper and took possession of the small pieces of baggage which they, in their haste, had forgotten."

By the time this story was ended the handle of the door behind us rattled significantly; we withdrew to a respectful distance, it opened, and the Emperor made his appearance, followed by his family. This was a signal for the dancing to begin, and my partner came to claim me for the first quadrille.

There was such a crowd that we could not dance comfortably. Little annoyances, however, were nothing to me. I felt, for some unaccountable reason, wildly, absurdly happy, — happier than I have ever been since I left home. I laughed, talked, danced, and enjoyed myself to the utmost. My dress was becoming, and every one was pleasant; nothing seemed likely to occur to mar my happiness, as Sacha kept away from me, Mr. Cheremenieff was not there, George looked kindly on me, and the ambassador was always at my elbow.

The imperial family mingled so freely with the guests that it was impossible not to turn one's back upon them sometimes. Quite an excitement was created at one moment, by a couple who were waltzing so vigorously that they became entangled in some chairs, and fell down with a tremendous crash. The gentleman broke three chairs in his descent, and the lady fortunately fell on top of her partner. The Emperor rushed forward to ascertain the extent of the injury, but everything was unharmed except the chairs. Another audacious couple waltzed into His Imperial Majesty and nearly upset him. They retired, covered with confusion.

I will say nothing about the magnificent toilets of the grand duchesses, although I could write pages about them. I would rather think of how pleasantly George talked with me in the few minutes we had together before the mazurka began. He had no partner, and asked me to dance it with him, but I refused.

"I would like to dance with you," I said, "but I have already refused two people, and I suppose I must not change my mind."

"Then you will allow me to take you in to supper?" he asked.

"Yes, but what will you do with your partner?"

"I shall not dance," he returned.

"If you have any idea of sitting with me during the mazurka," I said, laughing, "you must give it up, because I promised the ambassador that I would converse with him about Rome while you giddy young people are dancing."

"I suppose, however," he remarked, with a quizzical expression, "that you will not insist upon my joining the giddy young people unless I choose?"

"I should never think of insisting, because I should not expect you to obey, and a failure would be humiliating."

The ambassador came up at this moment. "Are you talking about failures?"

"I was telling Count Piloff," I responded, "that my efforts to enjoy myself at balls were generally failures. No, —" I broke off suddenly, seeing that George did not approve of this, and thinking myself that the falsehood was unnecessary, — "that is not what I was saying, but it was nothing of consequence. Do you know who that lady is in the amber-colored dress?"

George left me as my companion replied, and we began comparing notes about Rome, which interesting occupation we continued until the doors into the supper-room were thrown open.

"Oh!" I cried, clasping George's arm and starting forward. "From the heart of an arctic winter we are transported to the tropics!"

It was really like a glimpse into a southern clime, and I could not realize that there was a temperature outside of ten degrees below zero. We looked into a grove of tall, waving palm-trees, through the green foliage of which a softened light was shed from thousands of wax candles on a quantity of small tables, glittering with glass and silver. A larger table, raised slightly above the others, was set with gold dishes for the imperial

family. The walls of the garden — or room, as I discovered it afterwards to be — were lined with orange, lemon, and magnolia trees, and a faint tropical perfume greeted me as I advanced into this paradise.

Servants in silk stockings and gold-laced coats were moving noiselessly about.

"Are we expected to eat amid all this magnificence?" I inquired.

"Certainly. You must do justice to a hot supper," responded George.

"You may," I said, as I took my seat at one of the small tables, the centre of which was a blooming bed of geraniums and heliotrope, obscuring my opposite neighbors, and lending a dash of color to the snowy linen and shining silver. "I shall do nothing except to look about me."

"I hope you will not altogether cease talking."

"I have been reading a frightful thing lately in the newspapers," said I, shuddering, "and I don't know why the remembrance of it should come upon me here, in the midst of this dream of the Arabian Nights, for it makes me sad, which is extremely inappropriate."

"I know," returned George; "it is the account of that fearful plague in the south of Russia."

"Yes," I agreed, growing pale and solemn as a recollection of the details came to me. "How horrible to think of dying in twenty-four hours!" I could not taste my bouillon, but sent it away untouched.

"Don't think of it," said my companion consolingly, "it can do no good to ponder over it."

"But what a contrast!" (looking around me).

"Not more striking than many others which we might see. Life is made up of them. Every possible measure is being taken to prevent the spread of the scourge; it has not yet gone beyond the Volga. Whole villages in which the disease has appeared have been burned to the ground, together with the clothing of the peasants, for whom new homes have been provided. You need not be apprehensive."

"It is not that," I returned, recovering my spirits and my color somewhat. "I am not alarmed for myself, but it seems such a frightful curse."

"It is," murmured George. "Poor Russia has had more than her share of affliction. Whatever her faults, she has been heavily punished for them."

There fell upon us a silence which I was loath to break, for I felt strangely subdued and quiet. It was George who spoke first, with a well-affected air of indifference, in which I could detect a thrill of meaning.

"Alice tells me some strange news."

"Indeed! Is it about any one whom I know? Will it interest me?"

"It should interest you, for it is about yourself."

I darted an inquiring look at him, and he smiled calmly.

"I don't know why Alice told me," he continued, "for she said it was a secret, and that, if I betrayed her confidence, you would never forgive me."

A little sharp cry escaped me. I changed it into a laugh, but it sounded hoarse and unnatural. For an

instant it seemed cruel that he should have heard it in this way, — that I should not have been the one to break it to him, and to take the sting out of it; then came the thought that it was better so, for I felt instinctively that I should never have had courage to tell him. But the beating of my heart was almost painful, as I replied, "I wish you would tell me what the important communication was."

He went on calmly: —

"Have you, as she says, given Thurber a half-promise to marry him?"

"Oh!" I remonstrated, "he did not say anything about marrying. I only promised to think of an engagement."

My companion smiled rather sadly, as he looked at my flushed face.

"Engagements lead to marriage, and are just as binding," he said.

"I don't understand how you can think that."

"A woman has no right to engage herself to a man whom she does not intend to marry," George responded slowly; "and it seems to me that one ought to hold an engagement as sacred as a marriage. Don't you think so?" (looking at me inquiringly).

"Certainly," said I emphatically. "Still, it is not really as binding."

He shook his head in disapproval.

"It should be. A promise should be as binding as the law."

My heart *sank* as I realized for the first time that I

had given Mr. Thurber a promise which perhaps I could not fulfil. For the first time, the full sense of what I had done came over me, and nearly overwhelmed me. Until that moment I had thought of it lightly, as something which had been said to pass away the time.

After a pause, I remonstrated: "But mine is not an engagement. I told Mr. Thurber that I would try and make up my mind to be engaged to him when he returns."

"You are not kind," said George, turning towards me, and speaking with great deliberation, "to try and blind me. It is mistaken pity on your part. Believe me" (looking at me with earnest kindness), "it is better for me to face the truth; then I shall delude myself with no false hopes, — that would be the most cruel thing of all. I feel sure that you would not have held out this hope to Thurber if you had not intended to do all that lay in your power to bring yourself to love him. A woman like you would not have made that promise thoughtlessly, or fulfilled it carelessly. You must have felt sure that you would succeed. You see" (with a half smile) "I can reason calmly enough about it, and I am not afraid of the truth."

An unutterable sadness came over me. How little, in reality, I fulfilled his ideal! Had I not done the very thing he pronounced me incapable of, viz., given my word thoughtlessly, and fulfilled it carelessly? Never, until that moment, had I owned the truth to myself.

With an inward thanksgiving that George did not *know me as* I really was, I spoke:—

"You may be perfectly right. I may have done all this; and yet" (I questioned steadily) "am I to blame if my heart has refused to listen to my will, and if I find that I cannot take the step which he expects of me?"

He gave me a startled glance, and, seeing the grave question in his eyes, I laughed. He looked infinitely relieved. "I thought, for a moment, that you were in earnest," he said apologetically.

"You would have thought very poorly of me if I had been so," I remarked, calmly beginning to eat my peach.

"No," he asserted, "not very poorly; but you would have seemed fickle, which is the last fault I should have accused you of possessing" (with a glance of admiration).

I felt wretchedly mean and small. I was alarmed at the high opinion George had of me, and the disappointment he would feel if I failed to keep my promise to Chilton Thurber. I have felt lately that it would be impossible for me to do that. The sentiment I have for him is not love, and I doubt my ability to make it so. "Oh, surely," I thought, "George judges very harshly!" But I concealed the pain I was enduring as well as I could, and endeavored to draw my companion to other topics. Fortunately, the guests soon left the tables; and we followed their example, though I cast one last lingering look at the glories which were about to become a thing of the past.

When I took my way reluctantly to the ball-room, it

was apparent that I no longer threw myself into the pleasure of the moment, as I had done the first of the evening.

"You are not so happy as you were when you arrived," said George. "Why is that?"

"I could not expect to be," I answered; "for I have not been so thoroughly happy for years as I was when I first came. I knew it would not last. I am thankful to have had the feeling, even for a short time," I added lightly.

There was not much rest for me last night. When I reached home, my thoughts were very unpleasant companions. I began to realize, in my inmost heart, that it was my duty to accept Mr. Thurber; and that duty stared me blankly in the face, in spite of all my efforts to shut it out.

"But it is a sin," I cried mentally, "to marry a man whom I don't love! He would not wish me to say Yes with my lips, while my heart rebelled."

A little voice answered me: "Then you should not have promised. You said you would try to love him. How have you kept your word? By putting him as much out of your mind as possible. You have failed grievously, but simply because you have not made the effort which it was your duty to make. You have no right to shirk the punishment of your own thoughtless acts. The only course which you can pursue with honor is to accept Chilton Thurber, and then do your best to *love him.*"

And deep down in my heart a few words were whis-

pered, which made me wretched and ashamed; for they spoke my own weakness so clearly, and showed so plainly that I could not trust my own motives. These were the words which I heard: —

"You must accept Chilton Thurber, or George will despise you for being fickle."

What was it to me, if George did think me fickle? So I asked myself many times. But in spite of my common sense, the words were echoed over and over in my mind.

February 26, 18—.

The carnival is over, and Lent has begun. The last palace-ball was given Sunday evening, and that ended the festivities of the season; so we have settled down to a comparatively quiet life.

The moujiks' carnival was a serious affair, as it was impossible to get any work done while it lasted. On the Champs de Mars a number of temporary theatres and booths were erected, and the crowd was dense during the entire week, — men in their sheepskins, and women with bright handkerchiefs tied under their chins, all so happy and good-tempered! The performances in the theatres went on all day, and nearly all night. Flaming pictures of Russians and Turks in mortal combat, gunboats blowing up, and blazing artillery, ornamented the outside of these structures.

Among the theatres were dozens of merry-go-rounds, each having its own particular style of music; and as they were near together, the effect was something

startling. One hand-organ was grinding out the "Red, White, and Blue." Grace nearly wept with joy when she heard it; and we had great difficulty in dragging Tom away from the instrument.

"This is the happiest moment of my visit!" he exclaimed plaintively.

We stood and watched the people for a long time. They were so happy it was a pleasure to look at them. Towards the end of the week, however, the effects of the carnival began to show themselves in a rather unpleasant way.

The moujik has few wants. If he has money enough to buy his sheepskin coat once in six or eight years, and his black bread each day, it is all he desires. What can he do with any extra kopecks he may have? He spends them for *vodka*, of course, and during the carnival he drinks steadily all the time. The result may be imagined. It takes the first three days of Lent for him to recover from the *fête*. During this time it is next to impossible to get any work done, — even a nail driven in, or a shoe mended.

But the moujik makes up for his indulgence by the severity of his fast. He eats no meat, eggs, milk, or butter; and as good fish is expensive, he takes it salt, dried, or stale. If he falls ill, no power on earth can induce him to break his fast. He would rather die than to commit the sin of taking a mouthful of beef or wine. As there are four Lents a year in the Greek Church, I for one do not begrudge the Russian peasant his little *indulgences* between.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE KREMLIN.

Moscow, March 2.

A DREARY time to travel, but still drearier to stay at home, if home be Petersburg. The weather has been and still is in a transition state, — mud and melting snow in the streets; the sun persistently hiding his face; short, dark, rainy days alternating with gray, snowy ones.

The Russians call this season the "Black Winter," and it sometimes lasts until the middle of April. What a prospect! But we shall be far away before then.

Tom could not make up his mind to leave Russia without seeing Moscow; in fact, we all wanted to come here, although we were told it would not look its best at this dull season. Alice proposed to make one of the party, but Nicolas could not join us, and Tom almost refused to go when he found there would be four ladies in his sole charge. In vain we told him that we could all take care of ourselves. He replied that they would think he was a Turk travelling with his harem; though, when questioned, he was quite vague in his mind as to who "they" meant.

At last *some one* suggested that George should be

asked to join the party. Tom's face became radiant, and he added, "Thurber told me he would come to Moscow for a day or two while we were there, if I would let him know. He is not far off, and can get away from his hunting for a day at least."

The more Tom talked about it, the more pleased he was with the idea of asking George; and the latter consented to go with us without any hesitation. We started last night.

It is fortunate that George came, for so far he has done everything which has been done, and Tom has dropped quietly into the background.

What a city this is! A mixture of barbaric splendor and civilized squalor, and so utterly unlike any place in the world that one who has not been here cannot get the faintest idea of what it is like.

I do not think we lost much by coming in the night. The country is a vast wilderness, for the railroad is built in a direct line, without regard to cities which it might easily have been made to pass through. I distinguished various collections of low, shed-like structures when I awoke this morning. The only signs of life about them were some smoking chimneys. The snow was drifting about aimlessly in the air, as if loath to settle in so melancholy a spot.

We partook of tea at all hours of the night, as on our first journey in Russia. The sleeping-car was wonderfully comfortable. Grace, Alice, and I occupied a large compartment at one end. The former was wakeful, *and, finding* the night cold, in the goodness of her heart

she occupied her sleepless hours by keeping me covered with a fur cloak. The consequence was, she grew nervous.

I awoke once, and found her sitting on the floor at my feet, wrapped up to the chin.

"Grace, what *is* the matter?" I asked anxiously.

"I am almost sure," she answered, puckering her brows thoughtfully, "that I forgot to tell Mathilde to put a new flounce on that green dress, and she will have nothing to do while we are away."

"Is that all?" was my unsympathetic rejoinder; and I fell asleep immediately.

I slept until the others were all assembled in that part of the car which served us for a sitting-room on the journey; and when I appeared, Tom exclaimed,—

"Dorris looks fresher than any of you. How can any one feel so good-natured before breakfast?"

Tea and bread constituted the only meal which we were able to procure before our arrival, at eleven o'clock this morning. George took charge of the baggage, carried our parcels, and waited upon us untiringly. After all, polish is an agreeable thing, whether it covers much heart or not. I suppose if George had not been educated to wait upon ladies, or if he had not acquired the habit of caring for others, he might be equally willing, but he would not know how to do it. As it is, he is simply the perfection of a travelling companion. Tom means well, and is kind-hearted; but it does not occur to him that there is a draught over Judith's head, or that Alice cannot open her bag, that Grace wants her book,

or I another pillow, until George has arranged it all, when he looks up with surprise, and says, "Why did n't you ask me?" and immediately offers to do a dozen things which we do not want. George did not bore us with too much conversation, either. In short, he was everything one could desire, and nothing which we did not desire.

Arrived in this city, we took possession of two sleighs, and started for the Slaviansky Bazar. There was a damp snow falling, and it is still storming fitfully. Never, in such a short space of time, have I suffered as much as in that drive.

"Alice," I cried, while my hat was jolted over one ear, as I grasped the seat tenaciously, "is there any pavement?"

"I don't think it is worse than the one in Petersburg," said my sister calmly.

"It reminds me of nothing so much as the waves of the sea," I continued; but Tom interrupted me:—

"The waves let you down easy; but these 'thank-you-ma'ams' don't let you down at all, — they throw you."

I thanked Providence inwardly when, in a very battered condition, we reached the hotel. A porter in Russian costume rushed forward to assist us out of the sledge.

"I don't think," remarked Judith, "that there is much of me left to get out."

"We must have breakfast at once," Tom insisted; and in less than an hour it was placed before us.

That business disposed of, we strolled out in a body

and on foot to explore the town. Tom proposed a carriage.

"No," said Judith, "a sleigh."

Whereupon I added my voice: "Whichever you take, you will wish you had taken the other. Let us walk."

My proposition met with approval, and we started.

Oh, the queer old place! The shabbiness, quaintness, and general junk-shop appearance of the streets! Mud, moujiks, dirty snow, painted signs, poor old horses, gorgeous stucco palaces, bright-green churches, scarlet gates, walls with religious and battle pictures painted over them, shrines with burning candles, second-hand shops, brilliant passages, more churches than I can count, with gilded domes and minarets and crosses; and, most wonderful of all and above all, the Kremlin! There never was a city like it, and there never will be another.

"So this is Moscow," said Tom, when we had walked a few blocks. "I have seen enough to last me a lifetime."

"It is not in the least like what I had pictured it," Judith exclaimed. Tom had brought out a small note-book, and was overwhelming Alice and George with questions.

"The idea of your not knowing when that gate was built, or the name of the architect," he cried impatiently. "I shall not come out again without my 'Murray.'"

"I hope you won't," laughed Alice. "I am not prepared to serve as guide-book for you."

We were *strolling* along independently, in regular

tourist style, when Judith, who was a few steps in advance, cried suddenly, in long-drawn tones of wonder and admiration, "Oh—h—h!"

"It is Vasili Blagennoi," said Alice.

"I should think it might be something of that sort," remarked Tom, as all six of us came to a stand-still before the most gorgeous, effective, barbaric structure which I ever saw. It was a collection of towers and domes of all shapes, sizes, and colors, thrown together helter-skelter, and forming a church. Not a square inch of it was uncolored. Scarlets and bright greens vied with flaming yellow and dull purple.

"I can tell you all you wish to know about this," said George triumphantly. "It was built in the reign of Ivan the Terrible, by an Italian, whose eyes the wicked Tsar caused to be put out, so that he might never build another like it. This tradition you must believe, though 'Murray' says it is a mistake."

"I should think it would have stricken him blind," I remarked. "Can we go in?"

"Or," added Tom, "shall we stand here on the corner, advertising ourselves as tourists? They might suppose we belonged to Cook, there are so many of us."

With eyes very wide open, we clattered up the stone steps. It was so cold and dark as we entered that it struck a chill to the marrow of my bones.

"Imagine me your *commissionnaire*," said George, "while I explain everything to you. There are eleven domes in this church, and each one contains a chapel *which is* dedicated to a different saint."

"Why do you stop?" asked Tom. "If you are personifying a *commissionnaire*, you must never cease talking from the time you come in until we fee you."

"I really cannot think of anything more to tell you."

Alice now took her turn. "The church is built in memory of an idiot, or two idiots."

"True; I had forgotten that."

We made our way from one chapel to another, through low, narrow passages, the ceilings of which we could touch with our hands.

"Don't let us stay here," pleaded Grace. "If you only knew how cold I am!"

We could all sympathize with her, and we came out gladly into the damp air.

"Now for a look at the Kremlin," cried Tom, "and then home to get warm."

We entered the gate nearest us, and walked about among the various buildings which constitute the Kremlin. Churches, the palace, an arsenal and treasure-house, the whole surrounded by a high, white wall, and placed on an eminence in the centre of the city, — this is the Kremlin of which I have dreamed.

Looking at it, as I did for the first time, under a dull March sky, sharp little snow-flakes pelting me fiercely in the face, melting snow under foot, and a general nastiness and sloppiness about me, I was moved to a sort of wonder that any one could ever have admired this strange architecture.

"I never saw anything so disappointing as that great bell" (*standing at a distance, and surveying it with*

interest). "I expected it to be three times as large. How do you feel about it, Dorris?"

"I entirely agree with you."

"Life is full of disappointments," quoth George. "If we go to the hotel, rest well to-night, and visit this spot to-morrow, I have no doubt you will wonder that it could have made so little impression upon you to-day."

"Very well," said Grace, who is always willing to rest, "let us try your plan. We shall feel fresher to-morrow."

We passed the Holy Gate on our way out, and were told that every one, from the Tsar down, goes through it with bare heads.

March 3.

We had a spare hour before dinner yesterday. The rest of the party went to their various apartments. I took possession of the sitting-room and the guide-book.

Before long Tom and George appeared, with noses slightly red, and a general look of having been out in the frosty air.

"I thought you were both diligently writing letters," I declared.

They looked rather doleful, as if their expedition had not been altogether pleasant. Neither of them spoke, therefore I began to make inquiries, and elicited the information that they had been dropping cards on some acquaintances.

"But why so dismal over it?" I cried. "Were any *of the people* in?"

No, they had found no one at home.

"My mail has come," Tom vouchsafed to remark, after a moment.

"Well?" I said inquiringly.

"I must go to America in May, instead of remaining here till the end of the summer, and if you and Grace wish to see Italy, we must leave Petersburg by the middle of this month. Even then we shall be hurried."

George did not wait to hear my comments, but walked quietly out of the room. Tom busied himself with some papers, and I sat and thought, — thought of going home; and was amazed that no thrill of joy ran through me, but that, on the contrary, there was a faint, dull disappointment in my heart.

In the midst of these meditations, the door opened, and Mr. Novissilsky was announced! I could hardly believe my eyes. Tom, of course, rushed forward to meet him, but I turned my back to the room, and became engrossed in the street scenes outside. It was only when my brother-in-law called my name that I looked at the intruder, and bowed coldly. This is the first time I have come in contact with him since that night at the theatre.

Tom evidently thought my manner odd, but he simply said he would call Grace, and left us. I knew that he would return immediately, but this was too good a chance to be lost, and I determined to let Mr. Sacha Novissilsky know what I thought of him. Fixing upon him a steady look, the contempt of which should have scorched him, I said slowly, "I wonder that you can

present yourself before me! You must know what my opinion of you is, after the falsehood you deliberately told me about Count Piloff."

Sacha's melancholy face looked a shade more sombre, and his upper lip curled in an ugly way. He kept his eyes fastened on the floor.

"Why do you tell me it was a falsehood?" he answered courteously.

I was taken by surprise. I did not expect such self-possession.

"Because I believe Count Piloff," I answered firmly.

"Oh, then you told him of the statement I made? No doubt he gave you overwhelming proofs of his veracity!" (with a slight sneer, but still a courteous manner). "George is famous," he went on, "for making the ladies believe him, and no doubt — " Here he was interrupted by Tom's reappearance. I went out of the room in a white heat, and did not return until he had taken his departure.

"I wonder," said I, as I took my seat at the dinner-table, "why that young man follows us about in this way!"

"You are unkind, Dorris," remonstrated Judith. "He came to Moscow to see an old comrade who is dying, and he has taken George off with him to the bedside of their friend."

"I thought you would freeze him stiff when he made his appearance," cried Tom.

"I intended to do so."

"*But why?* What harm has he done you?"

I did not care to explain, so I made some laughing reply, and turned my attention to dinner.

We had planned to go to the theatre in the evening. George did not return, so we started without him. It was rather a dismal affair, though we all did our best to be gay.

When we met at breakfast this morning, George looked grave and troubled. He informed us that the friend whom he and Sacha had gone to see was dead, and then he seemed to make an effort to throw off gloomy thoughts, and to help us enjoy ourselves.

We went to the Kremlin again. A fresh, pure coating of snow had fallen during the night, and dazzled us in the sunlight. The domes of the churches within the walls took deeper, purer shades of blue, green, and gold, and the sunshine scintillated on the delicate tracery of the chains and crosses which surmounted them. We got a magnificent view of the city from the walls. We were raised so high above the squalor and the dirt that they did not stare us in the face; the white snow, too, covered a multitude of sins. We looked down upon hundreds of minarets, spires, domes, and crosses, all brightly colored and shining in the sun; countless green roofs added their contribution of color; and far in the distance was the low range of the Sparrow Hills, from which Napoleon got his first view of Moscow.

We all agreed that the scene was utterly different from yesterday, when we had seen it in a smart, pelting snow-storm.

From thence we proceeded to inspect the interior of

the Church of the Assumption, in which all the Tsars of Russia have been crowned, beginning with the first Romanoff. It is small, but full to overflowing of historical reminiscences and ornaments. The platform on which the coronation takes place stands under the dome. Around the walls are tombs of ecclesiastical dignitaries, the most honored having the corner places. There is not an inch of the cathedral which is unornamented.

"Here," said George, standing in front of the iconostase, "is a picture of the Virgin which, according to tradition, was painted by St. Luke."

"Oh," cried Grace, "what gorgeous jewels!"

"The gems in this icon," continued our cicerone, "are worth two hundred and fifty thousand dollars, and the riches inside this little building amount to more than all the wealth of the empire."

The others began enthusiastically to examine the iconostase, which was of gold, ornamented with pictures and rich jewels. George drew my attention to the walls of the building, covered with painting, and incrusted with Siberian marble.

"I suppose this is jasper," said I inquiringly.

"Yes," George responded rather absently, then added abruptly, "I thought you did not like Sacha."

I must have looked surprised at the suddenness of this remark; but my companion did not vouchsafe a glance in my direction. He was apparently absorbed in contemplation of the tomb of St. Peter.

"I do not like him," said I, at last; "on the contrary *I dislike him* intensely."

"Yet you and he were quite confidential in Petersburg," he returned, making an unsuccessful effort to speak lightly.

I answered, in rather a reflective tone, —

"*He* was confidential. At first I was sorry for him, because I thought Judith treated him so badly, and I used to sympathize with him. I soon ceased to waste my sympathy, however."

"What did your cousin do to him?"

"That seems to me a most foolish and unnecessary question," I answered impatiently. "You must have known that Sacha was in love with her. She encouraged him, as well as Prince Tucheff and all of them, when she was really engaged to another man. I cannot understand," I added virtuously, "how she did it!"

George looked at me for an instant, with a disagreeable smile.

"I dare say you cannot," he exclaimed; and with a short, bitter laugh, turned to Tom, who was asking him some question.

I wandered on alone, with a little throb of indignation in my heart. George can be extremely disagreeable when he chooses. What did he intend by that sarcastic manner and significant look? Why should he have answered me in that way? What did Sacha mean by saying George could make ladies believe him? I dislike a man whom I cannot understand. Two days ago — nay, even last night — I believe I was on the verge of falling in love. What a fortunate escape for me! I should not like to fall in love with a sarcastic man. Besides,

am I not as good as engaged to Chilton Thurber? George would never ask me to marry him, because he considers me pledged ; yet it would seem as if he meant to imply that I had encouraged his attentions. Well, I give up trying to understand him, but I am very glad that I am not in love with him.

While I was pondering over these various perplexing thoughts, and losing my good spirits, to say nothing of my temper, my revery was broken by Tom, who was saying, —

"Thurber will not have much time with us if he does not come to-day."

"Do you expect him?" I cried, angry with myself that I could not drive back the blood which rushed in a torrent to my face.

"Surely, Dorris, you heard me say that I had written him when we were to be here!" Tom replied in an injured tone.

They were all standing about me, and I felt the necessity for restraining the impatient words which were ready to drop from my lips. Forcing the blandest possible smile, I said, as I turned towards the door, —

"How delightful to have him here with us!"

"I don't know about that," grumbled Tom. "We can't stay forever waiting for him."

"Perhaps you had better send him a telegram at once," interposed George. "He may not have received the letter."

"Perhaps," I exclaimed, in a tone which, though *carefully modulated*, thrilled with vexation, "we had

better do nothing of the sort! If Mr. Thurber does not wish to meet us, we had better not force him to do so."

There was an awkward silence for a moment, broken by Tom, who remarked something about my being "excited."

Judith put her hand on my arm and drew me away, and I felt that I was being soothed, and that every one wished me to return to a better temper. I wished the same. It was extremely disagreeable to feel so hot and excited.

We went through the Treasury, but I have no idea what we saw. George did not speak to me again, and I was glad he did not. In fact, every one let me alone. I imagine they were sorry for me, because they thought I was so disappointed at Mr. Thurber's non-appearance. This was humiliating, but I knew not how to undeceive them. It is not so unpleasant to have people suppose that Chilton Thurber, and even George, are desperately in love with me; but it is a different matter when they begin to think that I am pining for a person who neglects me. I suspect that my heart was made on a small scale. I am troubled about it. Either I am becoming fickle, or I never knew myself before. Certainly I never thought so much about myself.

Evening.

As we were sitting at lunch, our English friend arrived. I was absurdly conscious when I shook hands with him, — aware of a blush on my face, and of the

fact that all the party except George turned their eyes away from our meeting.

"So you have come at last!" cried Alice. "We thought you were very slow about it."

"I did not receive the letter until last night."

"These Russians," said Tom, "are incapable of hurrying. Tell them 'Si Chass,' and they think that means any time within a week."

We finished our lunch leisurely, listening to Mr. Thurber's account of his adventures. Then we all strolled out to see the palace. Mr. Thurber, as of old, constituted himself my escort, and took occasion to say to me very quietly, —

"I shall spend only a day or two with you, and I shall not ask you what decision you have arrived at until I come to Petersburg. If my presence here annoys you, I trust you will tell me."

"Why should it?" I responded frankly. "I like to have you here."

He looked unmistakably pleased; and I thought, at that moment, that I should find it easy to get along with him, if I did marry him. He never annoys or makes me lose my temper, as George does. So we wandered through the palace, chatting in the best possible spirits; and I wondered how I could have forgotten what a pleasant companion Mr. Thurber always has been. At first, the others left us to ourselves. Then Tom, forgetting his *rôle* of match-maker, which had been instilled into him by the women of his family, called upon Mr. Thurber to settle some discussion he was having with Judith.

I stood looking out of one of the great windows in the Hall of St. George. As I turned away from it, my eyes fell upon George, who was staring absently at an inscription on the wall. There was such an expression of misery on his face that my heart smote me. I stood still in the window.

"Count Piloff," said I graciously, "will you be kind enough to come and tell me what I am looking at out of the window?"

He glared at me, as though he were half-inclined to refuse, but came forward reluctantly, until we were side by side in the window embrasure. Then I spoke: —

"You act so strangely to-day. Perhaps I have been disagreeable; but I am amiable now, and I want you to be pleasant."

He looked as if he did not understand my words, and I waited some time for his reply. It was spoken at last, low and hurriedly, with eyes resolutely fixed on the many-colored roofs below us.

"I know you would prefer to see me always gay and smiling, — ready to talk when you wish it; equally ready to listen when you wish to talk; willing to have you treat me one day as if you had a really friendly feeling for me, and the next day spurn me with contempt; always happy, never wretched and miserable, even though you have done all in your power to make me so. You would prefer to have me like that; but I am finding out every day that you are disappointed in me; and I can assure you that you expect more than any man who is merely mortal can give!"

"I should think so," I answered, ready to smile, "if I expected all that. You take altogether a wrong view of the matter. You should not be angry, because — "

"O Dorris!" he interrupted gently, turning a sad face towards me. "I am not angry with you, my dear. I never have been. You cannot appreciate how ridiculously happy it makes me when you look at and speak to me kindly, though I know it means nothing more than that you don't dislike me. When you are cross, I cannot help imagining that it is my fault. It is my supreme foolishness in thinking myself of enough importance to affect you in any way. Come," starting to join the others who were leaving the hall. "Don't mind what I say," he added, as we strolled along. "I suppose it is Thurber's coming which has put me out, and your happiness in seeing him. It was so pleasant having you all to myself, I forgot there was any one who had a prior claim."

"You must have found it pleasant," I responded dryly. "You proved it by going out with Sacha, and remaining away all the evening."

"Did you care?" he cried quickly, looking a shade less wretched. "I thought you would be glad to have me away, — especially after what Sacha told me."

"What did he tell you?" I exclaimed, stopping short.

"Nothing which should have disturbed me; for I ought to have discovered it myself long ago."

"But what was it?" I insisted.

He looked a little surprised, but answered, quite *frankly*: —

"He only reminded me of how much you and he used to talk together, and told me that the subject of your conversation was generally Thurber. Then he pointed out a thousand little things which happened in Petersburg, to prove that you cared more for Thurber in the beginning than you imagined."

"What did you say to all this?" I exclaimed, as calmly as possible.

"I listened."

"And then?"

"And then," replied George, a faint flush creeping over his face, "I told him that I did not care to discuss Miss Romilly's likes and dislikes with him."

"And he?"

"He smiled, and changed the subject."

"He is a miserable coward!" said I vehemently. "I hope you will never believe anything he tells you about me."

"Sacha is very much like other men. The greatest fault which he has is a fondness for hearing himself talk."

I restrained myself by a violent effort, and said no more about Sacha; but I must confess I did not understand George, and I do not understand him now. Only a week or two ago, he was encouraging me to be faithful to Chilton Thurber, and never hinted at the possibility of my caring for him. Now, he is angry because he thinks I have been in love with Mr. Thurber all the time. How inconsistent men are!

Tom drew near, and put an end to our conversation.

"Shall we go to see the home of the first Romanoff, or not?"

"Let us go, by all means," I responded.

The others agreeing, we left the palace, and drove to a humble little house in another part of the town.

"This," said Alice, as we entered the low room, "is where the first Tsar of Russia was born; and although I have been four times in Moscow, I never came here before."

"After all," remarked George, who had been talking incessantly on the way from the palace, "the Romanoffs were not thought so highly of in those days. The Dolgoroukys were great boyars before the Romanoffs were ever heard of."

"The greatness of the Romanoffs," said Tom, in an important manner, "dates from that time. I suppose a republican form of government would not have worked well among you turbulent Russians; else it is a pity that, instead of electing a Tsar, they did not make him president for life."

"I am not interested in your political discussions," said Grace; "but I should like to know if this is a stove."

It was a delicate bit of furniture, composed of painted porcelain tiles.

"That is a stove," responded George, "and there is a story painted on it, and illustrated by these pictures."

On the first floor of the house were only four small, low rooms. The wife's apartments were above, reached by a flight of steep, narrow stairs. The furniture would

send a "modern antique" dealer into ecstasies. The cradle and toys of the young Romanoff have been preserved, as well as the book out of which he learned to read.

"I wonder why this door was made so low," said Judith, as we were obliged to bend our backs nearly double in passing from one room to another.

"The great man had a deal of trouble with his boyars," replied George. "They refused to make obeisance to him, therefore he had this door, by which they entered his presence, cut so low that they were obliged to stoop in passing through it."

"What an ingenious idea!"

The afternoon had worn away while we were thus engaged, and we now found it time to return to the hotel for dinner. In place of changing my dress, I have been writing my experiences.

I confess frankly that I am as much puzzled with myself as I am with George. Instead of being consumed with grief at the sorrow I am causing others, I find it quite pleasant to have two men in love with me. I am quite aware that my feelings are selfish to the last degree. How heartless I must be! When I am with George I prefer him; and when I am with Mr. Thurber I wonder how I could ever have liked George better.

There is one thing about the latter which is rather absurd: I could not marry him if I would, for he has never asked me! He takes it so for granted that I have no idea of caring for him that I am sure it would be awkward if I did care, for I should be obliged to tell

him the fact plainly. Yet he is not a calm, placid lover, like the Englishman. Mr. Thurber has an air of saying mentally, "If you conclude to marry me, you will make a sensible decision, and will please me extremely; but if you decide otherwise, I shall wonder how you could be so foolish. I do not allow myself, in the mean time, to get excited over it; and whatever you may say or do will suit me perfectly."

These are his thoughts as I imagine them. He refuses to be jealous or angry. I cannot arouse in him the expression of anything beyond a proper, reasonable liking. George, on the contrary, although he tells me fiercely enough that he knows I do not care for him, is uneasy and wretched if I talk long with any one else, and watches me continually. He gets in a passion with me, and then says he loves me too much to be angry. My sober judgment tells me that Chilton Thurber is much better suited to me.

My life is not as peaceful as it was before I had two lovers, and I fear I am growing inordinately vain. Judith must have an immense amount of character not to be completely spoiled by the amount of attention she has received.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE BLACK WINTER.

PETERSBURG, March 6.

WE bade a reluctant farewell to Moscow, taking our last look at the wall of the Kremlin and the colored domes which rise out of it, by the light of a full moon, which glorified everything, and gave a weird, white beauty to the scene. Soon we shall pack our trunks and go away; and our places will be filled by others, and no one will miss us or care. For a little while Alice will be conscious of regret; but all her interests are here, she has her husband and child, and she will get on very well without us. This thought should not have power to sadden me, but it has.

"When I get home," Judith says, "I shall never come back to Europe."

I feel a strange reluctance to look beyond the present moment. I never picture myself returning to my country and friends. I only wish I could stay forever just as I am, and that change might never come to any of us. When I said something like this to Judith, she laughed softly. "You would soon grow tired of it," she insisted.

Such a climate as this is now! One must be of a wonderfully cheerful nature not to be depressed by the

constant gloom of this "Black Winter." Not possessing the requisite amount of elasticity, I am a very dismal object. Tom looks at me often, and shakes his head disapprovingly. "Too many balls," he says. "You were born for a quiet life, Dorris."

March 14.

Only a few more days and my brief respite will be over, and Mr. Thurber will return. In fact, he should be here to-day. As the time draws near, I shrink more and more from the necessary decision. Why is it that I cannot make up my mind? George could hardly assert that I set myself up on a pedestal now. I look upon myself as one of the weakest young women I have ever met, and I even plead guilty to a grain of coquetry. I am almost sure I shall feel sorry for it afterwards if I do not accept Chilton Thurber; and I know George will be painfully disappointed in me. It is not as if he expected to win me himself. That idea seems never to have occurred to him, though I did my best to make it dawn upon his mind when we were in Moscow.

He is strangely obtuse on that point. Having recovered from the severe attack of jealousy which I have recorded, he seems quite reconciled to looking upon me as Mr. Thurber's promised wife, and loses no opportunity of showing that he regards me in that light.

After all, why should I marry Mr. Thurber? I have been very happy as a single woman, while perhaps I should be less so if I married. It is not that I am *afraid of being* an old maid, for that prospect has never

had any terrors for me. But I have a strange reluctance to leave Europe, which I cannot understand. I fear that deep down in my heart is the desire to avoid George's disapprobation. Also, I am really fond of Chilton Thurber. I see that I am reasoning in a circle, so I will cease.

Life is not all sunshine, even for those who have royal blood in their veins. One of the young nephews of the Emperor is dead. Mourning comes alike to all of us.

Grace had a desire to see the funeral procession passing across the river from the palace to the fortress, and I consented to go with her, feeling that nothing could make my spirits any lower. We ordered the carriage and started.

The snow was thawing, and the streets were full of a dirty slush. Instead of the rain alternating with snow, which has fallen persistently for the last two weeks, the air was impregnated with a gray mist, which settled on the river where we stood, and permitted us only to distinguish the faint outlines of the lofty palaces on the bank. We waited for several minutes before we heard, through the fog, which seemed to muffle the sound, the weird music which betokened the approach of the procession.

Gradually they drew nearer. Through the lines of soldiers which bordered the road came a regiment of lancers, the arms and flag of the house, the pages and servants, each bearing a lighted candle. A crowd of priests, *numbering* not less than one hundred, followed

with lamps. The hearse was drawn by six horses, with black blankets and plumes, and the coffin was covered with cloth-of-gold lined with ermine. The Emperor and grand dukes rode directly behind it, on horseback. Mourning coaches and more soldiers followed.

We drove away from the sad scene in sympathetic silence, made our way through the dreary streets, and were glad to reach our own door again.

I wonder why Mr. Thurber does not come. I wonder if he will come. It would seem rather hard on me if, after overcoming my reluctance, and making up my mind to accept him, he should not make his appearance. What an embarrassing situation that would be!

March 21.

To-morrow we start for Warsaw, on our way to Vienna. Judith is happy, for we are to stay a week in the Austrian capital, and there she will see Roger. She goes about the house with a smile on her face, and breaks out now and then into song; while I, to mark the contrast, grow daily more dismal.

Mr. Thurber has not come, neither have we received any word from him. I know that my friends attribute my melancholy to his non-appearance, and are pitying me in secret. Perhaps, after all, they are not so wrong; for while at first I felt a deep relief as day after day passed, and he did not appear, yet now I begin to be slightly chagrined, and to wonder if his heart has failed him, or if he has discovered that he does not care for *me, as he* supposed.

George's one effort has been to persuade me that Mr. Thurber is not ill or in trouble; and he looks at me gravely when he thinks I am not observing him. His sympathy I repulse, and his attempts at consolation meet with no response from me. I have not been kind to him lately; in fact, I have not been kind to any one, — least of all to myself.

To-day will be spent in farewells; and to-morrow we shall bid good-by to Russia and the Russians forever.

Evening.

As I wrote those words, a familiar voice in the next room set my heart to beating furiously. I closed my journal, rose to my feet, but for a minute could not move.

He had come at last. He was in the next room, talking to Grace! I summoned all my self-control to my aid, and went in.

In my desire not to show too much emotion, I felt that I was giving him a cold reception; but Tom made up for it by his boisterous greetings. He began to ask questions.

"We certainly thought you must have shot yourself or been eaten by a bear. What have you been doing? Why did you stay so long?"

As I surveyed Mr. Thurber's tall figure, standing in our midst, it seemed to me that he had grown more unbending than ever. He looked pleased, however, and slightly excited.

"We were hunting," he explained, "and were overtaken by a storm. It was a week before it was possible to get back to the village: we missed our connections with the trains, and the roads were in such a condition that fast travelling was out of the question."

"I am mighty glad to see you, Thurber. Upon my word, I am," reiterated Tom. "You are just in time to see us off. We leave to-morrow."

"So soon!" exclaimed the other. "Which way do you go?"

"Through Warsaw. I want to stay there a day or two, to remind me of the days when I read 'Thaddeus of Warsaw.' Then we are going to Vienna, for a week. Grace has never been there. After that, I suppose we shall take a peep at Italy; but we have not decided upon anything beyond Vienna."

"I have," said Grace. "We are going to Florence."

"I did not intend to remain in Russia so late as this," said Mr. Thurber. "I should like to join your party, if you permit."

"Really! Will you?" cried Tom eagerly; and in a few minutes it was arranged that he should start to-morrow with us.

He then took leave, saying he had farewell calls to make; and we resumed our packing.

To-night we are all tired. We dined together for the last time with Alice. There were no strangers present, it being intended for a cheerful farewell meal. We were in better spirits than seemed quite natural, considering *that it was*, in all probability, the last time we should all *meet together* in that room.

I was in a fever of anxiety lest I should break down, and made every effort to be merry. The others did likewise, but none of us were calm: our laughter had a thrill of nervousness in it. It was only George who seemed perfectly natural: his voice was no louder than usual, and his face was very quiet.

The dinner was not long, and the gentlemen did not linger in the smoking-room. I ran away to the nursery to see the baby, making my escape unobserved; and, having kissed the soft little face many times, with a strange pain in my heart, I started to return to the others.

On my way, I thought I would take a peep at the library. It is my favorite room, and I had a fancy to take a last look at it by myself.

So, pushing the *portiere* aside, I entered. The light from the dining-room shone in, and made a bar of flickering yellow on the thick rug. In the fireplace were a few live coals in a bed of ashes. George stood by the chimney, his elbows on the mantel, and his face buried in his hands.

My entry had been so noiseless that it had failed to disturb him. My first impulse was to retreat without speaking; then I thought better of it, and resolved that this should be our good-by, for I knew I should have no other opportunity of seeing him alone.

I made my way quietly to his side. Still he did not move. Putting out my hand, I touched his arm.

He started violently, and turned his face towards me *without otherwise* changing his position. He looked as

if tortured by some physical pain; his face was so haggard and drawn that involuntarily I tightened my grasp on his arm.

His eyes gazed into mine for a moment with a wistful expression which hurt me, then dropped to my hand. Slowly he put out his hand and took mine into its clasp, turned away from the mantel, and made a movement with his lips as if he would have spoken. Seeing how impossible it was for him, I took the initiative, and said, in a voice which I hardly recognized as my own, —

"I came — to — to — see how the — room — the room would look."

This profound remark met with no response. Being senseless, however, it was harmless, and broke the spell which silence had cast upon us.

George held my hand in his, and looked at it tenderly, almost reverently, for a moment. Then he quietly let it drop, and I held it in front of me, and surveyed it stupidly myself, as if to discover some new line in it.

Finally he spoke, in a deep, earnest tone.

"Have you arranged it with Thurber?"

"No," I answered, turning my face up to his; "there has been no opportunity."

"You will let me hear it in some way when it is decided?"

"Yes," I said in a half whisper.

"I shall see you at the station to-morrow, and then you will go away with him," George continued thoughtfully.

He put his hands behind him, and leaned against the mantel.

"Ah, well!" he cried, with a forced laugh, "in a month I shall wonder at myself for this infatuation; and you, — you will have dropped me completely out of your life!"

"Don't laugh in that way!" I cried impetuously, putting out my hand. "Don't!"

He looked at me searchingly.

"Poor little Dorris!" said he tenderly. "You are sorry for me. You show it in your sad eyes and your quivering mouth. You are very good and patient with me. I have brought only sadness into your life," he added dismally, still looking at me as if he meant to impress every feature on his mind.

Sorry for him! He little knew what it was that was filling my small soul with agony. This demon which was pulling at my heart-strings was love, — love for him. Like a flash of lightning the knowledge burst upon me. I had been blind before, but it was written before me in letters of fire at that instant, and I could not choose but read it. Sorry for him! Yes, — overwhelmed with anguish for him and for myself. Oh, for courage to tell him that I loved him, that my promise counted for nothing in my own heart, and that I should die if he sent me away!

But I could not say it. He had not dreamed of such a thing, and I could not confess it.

Presently he put his hand gently up, and touched my cheek.

"I have made you cry again," he said, in the same low, sad voice. "I wish you would not cry."

My only answer was a long-drawn, quivering sob.

"Oh, hush, my darling, hush!" he whispered, turning his head away from me. "You break my heart."

As I look back now, I could kill myself for being such a coward. Why did I not confess the truth? What foolish pride was it which sealed my lips?

The silence which fell upon us seemed to last for hours; but in reality it could only have been a few minutes before George turned to me and said quietly, —

"You had better go now. They will miss you."

"But this is good-by," I cried brokenly, the tears falling like rain from my eyes as I lifted them imploringly to him. "Must I go away from you like this?"

He looked at me strangely for an instant; then, with an infinite tenderness, he put his arms round me and drew me to his heart. Very quietly he lifted my face to his, and kissed me twice on the lips. It would have been easy for me to tell him the truth then. My eyes sought his, to find there some encouragement for the confession which I was about to make, but all his calmness suddenly vanished; he turned away from me, crying, —

"Leave me, child! I can bear no more!"

I waited in silence for him to speak to me again. In vain: he stood by the chimney in the same position in which I had found him, and no marble statue could have been more quiet.

While I still hesitated, my cheeks burning and my heart beating tumultuously, a voice called, "Dorris!"

Other voices followed. I lingered for an instant, but

George did not stir. Grace continued to call me, and at last I walked slowly out of the room.

Now that I am alone, and can think it over calmly, I have no words strong enough to express my disgust at my own folly. To think that I, Dorris Romilly, should be in love! Worse still, desperately in love, — in love as I never dreamed was possible for me. And then that I should have been such an arrant coward as to lose my opportunity, and ruin all my chances of happiness. For, of course, I cannot go calmly to Count Piloff, and tell him that I would like to marry him; nor can I write it to him. I shall never see him alone again, and he will always think I care for Chilton Thurber. I see nothing bright in any direction, and if it were not foolish and useless, I should wish myself dead.

IN THE TRAIN, Saturday Night.

It is a relief to have said good-by, and not to feel that it is still a black cloud in the future. The saying of it, and the actual departure, were not so painful as the two days which preceded, when I could think of nothing else.

If it were not for Mr. Thurber's presence, which constantly reminds me of the explanation I must have with him, I could find it in my heart to be almost cheerful. Tom unconsciously brightened us this morning by his mishaps. In the first place, he got very much excited over the loss of his umbrella. Then, when he entered the car, he gave his head a smart knock against the side

of the door, in his attempts to get out of the way of a fat gentleman with a quantity of bags. Tom's hat was utterly demolished. He was such a comical object that we were obliged to laugh every time we looked at him; so our departure was less melancholy than it might have been.

As our train moved away, Alice, Nicolas, and George, all stood on the platform, smiling; and I hardly realized that I was taking my last look at them for many years.

Tom said, almost before we were out of the city, —

"What a relief to get out of that climate! For three weeks I have walked knee-deep in mud; and I have not seen the sun for so long that I believe I should be dazzled if he were to appear."

"Yes," assented Judith; "and the earth, sky, and buildings have all been such a dull color."

I listened in silence, looking out of the window to hide the desolation which I feared my eyes would betray.

They were all glad to get away! Mr. Thurber said nothing, for which I felt grateful to him.

The interminable marshy waste, which was all our eyes had to dwell upon, seems to encompass St. Petersburg for hundreds of miles. It is inexpressibly dreary. Judith is in excellent spirits, and no one appears to notice me. Mr. Thurber, however, watches me stealthily. The consciousness of this helps me to exercise my self-control.

WARSAW, Monday.

We arrived last night, in a pouring rain. I went to bed as soon as we reached the hotel; therefore, all I know of the city is that the pavements are passable, and the buildings large.

We drove from the station in two carriages. Judith and Tom took all the bags, and started before us at a rattling pace, looking triumphantly back at us as we plodded on more soberly.

Presently we overtook our friends, with only three wheels on their carriage, and Tom climbing ignominiously out of the upper door! They reached the hotel in a very muddy state, some time after us. Nothing could put either of them out of temper, however, and Judith only sighed as she examined the injuries her hat had received.

This morning dawned doubtfully, but soon decided to be showery. It seems to be an impossibility for the sun to shine in Russia at this season. If I could get a glimpse of God's clear blue sky, I am sure that this dull weight, which has lain on my heart for so long, would be lifted.

"I am going out," Tom announced, "and if you wish to see the town, you had better all come with me."

"Will you wait until after breakfast?" I suggested mildly.

Tom looked at me critically.

"Dorris, you are ill! Why don't you confess it, and give up?"

All eyes were upon me by this time, and I endeavored to laugh as I said that I was well enough.

"Only," I added, "these Polish beds are peculiar, and probably I did not sleep as well as you did."

Tom forgot me for an instant, as his thoughts turned to his favorite grievance.

"I hardly slept a wink last night," he insisted.

"You do look ill, Dorris," interrupted Grace. "I advise you to stay in the house and rest."

Staying in, I feared, meant a *tête-à-tête* with Chilton Thurber, which I did not feel strong enough to undergo, so I insisted upon accompanying Tom. He apparently expected to meet some of the descendants of that Thaddeus about whom he used to read, and as his expectations were not realized, he pronounced Warsaw a failure.

"Certainly, the glory has departed from Poland," Mr. Thurber remarked, as we passed some of the forts, which were manned by Russian soldiers. "Even the old palace of the kings is inhabited by the Russian governor-general."

We went into some shops. They pretended not to understand Mr. Thurber's Russian, although that is the language in which everything is taught in the schools, instruction being given in Polish as a foreign tongue.

The town is shabby. We wondered what part of it was inhabited by the *élite*.

"The Polish aristocracy," Mr. Thurber informed us, "has disappeared. No one knows exactly what has *become of* the old families. Many of them have emi-

grated. The fashionable foreigners who have taken up their residence here live on the Champs Elysées, through which we are about to drive."

It proved to be a very beautiful avenue, with one road in it for driving, one for equestrians, and two for foot passengers, shaded by magnificent trees.

Thence we went to what was once the summer palace of the kings, but is now used by the governor-general for a residence during part of the year. There is a charming little out-of-door theatre connected with this palace. The stage is on the shore of a lovely lake, and seats for the audience are on the opposite shore.

Altogether the day has been a busy one. Now night has come, and I am sitting alone in the dingy parlor, which looks out on the muddy street.

The others have gone to the theatre. I pleaded fatigue, and induced them to leave me. The two flickering candles cast but a pale light on my page, and I shall be obliged to give up writing. Then there will be nothing for me to do but to think.

Tuesday Morning.

A faint streak of sunlight makes its way in at my window, and there is a blinding glow in my heart. What have I done to deserve all this?

Last night, as I closed my journal, and sat in that comfortless room, waiting for something, I knew not what, there was a knock at the door. Following my permission to enter, the door opened, and Chilton Thurber appeared.

My heart sank, for I thought he had come for my answer; but I spoke with a brave voice, which did not betray my fluttering heart.

"How is this? I thought you were at the theatre."

"So I was," he responded, drawing one of the hard, uncomfortable chairs nearer the table, and throwing himself into it opposite me. "I told them I would come home and see how you were; for we were talking of you, and of our fears that you were more ill than you would confess."

"That was kind of you," I said absently.

"I had something to say to you, also," he continued, — "a statement to make, for which I have been watching my opportunity."

"Yes," I said faintly, "I know."

"I fancy that you do not know. You have quite a different idea from mine."

I looked at him inquiringly; but his face was as impassive as a block of wood, and instead of a pair of eyes I encountered an eyeglass which contorted one side of the face, and on which the light made bewildering reflections.

"I think," he went on, "that you are in some trouble, — trouble of mind. I take strange fancies sometimes; and if I am wrong, you must set me right. But the suspicion has entered my mind that possibly your suffering comes from your reluctance to tell me that you have failed to succeed, while I have been away, in your effort to care for me. I am impelled by some strange instinct — or, call it reason, if you like — to tell you that I read the death-blow to my hopes when I had been with

you ten minutes. I may say," he added thoughtfully, "that my hopes began to die the moment I saw you. You are spared the difficult task of telling me. So there is an end of it," — leaning on the table which stood between us, and dropping his glass with a clatter, while he fixed a pair of piercing eyes on me. "You cannot love me: I must learn to get on without you; and that was the reason I joined your party. Instead of running away from you, as most men would have done, I am determined to live it down while I am with you; to see you hour by hour, and say mentally, 'She is not for me' — and some time" (there was a slight tremor in the voice, but only for a second) "some time to feel contented that it should be so. I like to be peculiar. I am rather proud, do you know, of following a course of action which most people would have shunned."

This he said in his pleasant, ordinary voice; then went on more earnestly: —

"I should not have acted on my determination, if I had had the faintest suspicion that my presence would be painful to you. I have vainly sought an opportunity of explaining this to you; for your suffering has been so apparent that I have regretted my decision more than once. It seems to me now," he added, never taking his eyes off my face, "that there must be some further cause for your sadness; else you are morbidly exaggerating the pain you would give me, or the difficulty of the task I have spared you. If my suspicions are correct, — if you are in any trouble, — you should know that there is *no one in the* world who will help you more willingly than

I; and perhaps," he went on more carelessly, "there is no one who can so easily put things right."

Very impulsively I hurried around the shabby old table, and stood before my companion, with my hands tightly locked together in front of me.

"You thought all this!" I cried rapidly, my eyes growing larger, and a hot flush spreading over my face. "You really mean it? You are a man, like other men, and you —" Here I felt that I was becoming ridiculous; and I restrained the torrent of words which was ready to flow, and stood still, breathing very quickly, and trembling from head to foot.

Mr. Thurber looked slightly embarrassed, and put in his glass, with a grimace.

"I have no words to tell you," I went on more calmly, "of the dreadful state I have been in, and now by a few words you have made me so happy. Oh!" I cried, growing excited again, "is it really as you say? You are indeed the best man I ever knew. How little you realize what you are doing for me!"

He had started to his feet before; now he leaned carelessly on the back of his chair, and shook his head at me.

"You are too much excited" (in a tone of remonstrance). "You will make yourself ill."

For the first time in a week, a hearty, natural laugh broke from my lips. While the sound of it was yet in my ears, the door was quietly opened, and a third person stood before us. He glanced from one of us to the *other. I dropped into a chair, for I could not stand.*

George came up to us, smiling.

"You don't appear to be glad to see me."

"We are only paralyzed with astonishment," returned Mr. Thurber.

"And delight," I added, trying to speak lightly.

"How in the name of all that is surprising did you get here?"

"By train. Tom left his umbrella-case, and I started with it the next day. But where are they all?" (casting a searching glance about the room).

"At the theatre," responded Mr. Thurber, "where I ought to be; but I came back because—" He hesitated, then took up his hat, and, gazing into the crown, added thoughtfully, "I never could say that all over again, you know, so I leave you to tell him why I came back, Miss Dorris. I particularly wish him to know."

"But you are not going to run away the moment I arrive," George remonstrated.

"Sorry to do so," returned the other, "but they will think it odd if I don't come back."

"They will think it much more odd for me to be too tired to go to the theatre, and then to entertain two gentlemen at home."

George looked uncertain. Mr. Thurber started hastily for the door, saying,—

"Be sure you tell him, Miss Dorris"; and before I could reply he was gone.

There was an awkward pause, and then George said,—

"I never did such an absurd thing in my life as

to follow you here. But the longing to see you was stronger than I was. I could not get your face out of my mind as you looked that night in the library. I — oh, what must you think of me!" he cried, lingering in the shadowy part of the room.

I could not trust myself to speak for a moment; then I told him, as coldly as I could, what had taken place between Mr. Thurber and me.

When I had finished, he sank into a chair, and buried his face in his hands.

"O Dorris," he groaned, "do not mislead me! There is a ray of hope shining upon me. Don't be cruel enough to put it out!"

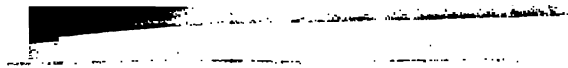
I knelt down by his side and drew his hand away.

"George," I said, with quivering lips, "how could you be so unkind to me as to tell me I must marry him, when I loved you all the time?"

. . . . . .

Judith says, with a mischievous face, —

"What, Dorris! a foreigner?"



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